

*The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor** recalls the part which he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**; the **priests and rulers** and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming: "He died for me!"*

*Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their truehearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while outside the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is **Nero**, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremest anguish he found satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.*

*There are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers** of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.*

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them." The Great Controversy, pp. 666-669

Overview of the Seals

The seals are parallel in many ways to **Matthew 24**. This seems to indicate that the seals are covering the period of the **Christian era** (see the chart on the next page).

The Bible and Ellen G. White on the "flow" of the seven seals

As we shall see, the best commentary on the seals is Ellen G. White's book The Great Controversy. There she expounds upon the seven seals in their proper order.

Summary of the Introductory Vision and the First Seal

- **The Ascension of the War Hero:** Acts 1:9-11; The Desire of Ages, pp. 830-833; Acts of the Apostles, pp. 30-34
- **The Arrival of the War Hero in heaven is anointed as priest/king. This event is announced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on earth:** Revelation 5; Acts 2; Acts of the Apostles pp. 35-46 (especially pages 38, 39)
- **The conquests of the Apostolic church in the first seal:** Acts of the Apostles, pp. 47-602

First Seal: The White Horse

Meaning: The first seal is parallel to the first church, **Ephesus**. The white horse represents the conquests of the Apostolic Church and its rider symbolizes Jesus.

"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer." (Revelation 6:1, 2)

The symbols

- A white horse with its rider
- A crown
- A bow
- Conquering and to conquer

The White Horse

In Zechariah 10:3-6 Judah is compared to a **conquering horse**:

*"My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and **will make them as His royal horse in the battle**. From him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the **battle bow**, from him every ruler together. They shall be **like mighty men**, who **tread down their enemies** in the mire of the streets in the battle. They shall fight because **the LORD is with them**, and the riders on horses shall be put to shame. "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the LORD their God, and I will hear them."*

Concerning God's plan for ancient Israel Ellen White explains that *"He [God] desired his people to go forth conquering and to conquer."* Review and Herald, July 10, 1900

And regarding the end time church Ellen White explains:

*"Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, **the church** is to enter upon her final conflict. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun [Revelation 12:1] and terrible as an army with banners' [Song of Solomon 6:10], **she** [the church] is to go forth into all the world **conquering and to conquer** [Revelation 6:1, 2]." Prophets and Kings, p. 725*

Ellen White also describes **Jesus** as the **rider** of the white horse. That is, the rider of the horse symbolizes Jesus and the horse itself represents His people (**Revelation 19** describes the time when the **church militant** will become the **church triumphant**, when the **spiritual victories** of Christ through the church become the **literal victory** of Jesus and His church:

*"The issue of the battle does not rest upon the strength of mortal man. "The Lord shall go forth as a **mighty man**, he shall stir up jealousy like a **man of war**: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall **prevail** against his enemies." **In the power** of Him **who rides forth conquering and to conquer**, weak, finite man may gain the victory." 4BC 1146*

Jesus accomplishes His work through **His people**:

*"God's workers must gain a far deeper experience. If they will surrender all to Him, **He will work** mightily for them. They will plant the standard of truth upon fortresses till then held by Satan, and with shouts of victory take possession of them. They bear the scars of battle, but there comes to them the comforting message that the **Lord will lead them on, conquering and to conquer**. Colporteur Ministry, p. 155*

*"Christ **identifies** His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints; and whoever touches His chosen ones, touches Him." Christian Service, p. 166*

*"The world today is in crying need of a revelation of Christ Jesus **in the person of His saints**. God desires that His people shall stand before the world a **holy people** [purity]. Why? Because there is a world to be saved by the **light** [white] of gospel truth; and as the message of truth that is to call men **out of darkness** [black] into God's marvelous **light** [white] is **given by the church**, the lives of its members, sanctified by the Spirit of truth, are to **bear witness** to the verity of the messages proclaimed. . . " In Heavenly Places, p. 313*

Different symbols are employed in Scripture to illustrate the intimate connection between Jesus and His people. He is the **head** and the church is His body. He is the **Shepherd** and his people are the sheep, He is the **husband** and his church is the bride (and they are one!!), He is the sovereign **Commander** and His people are His armies.

The Color White

Futurists/Dispensationalists believe that the white horse symbolizes a future antichrist that will pass himself off as Christ. But there is no evidence in the text to this effect.

George Eldon Ladd says the following about the meaning of the color white in the book of Revelation:

“... in the Revelation, white is always a symbol of Christ, or of something associated with Christ, or of spiritual victory. Thus the exalted Christ has white hair white as wool (1:14); the faithful will receive a white stone with a new name written on it (2:17); they are to wear white garments (3:4, 5, 18); the twenty-four elders are clad in white (4:4); the martyrs are given white robes (6:11) as is the great numberless throng (7:9 13); the son of man is seen on a white cloud (14:14); he returns on a white horse accompanied by the armies of heaven who are clad in white and ride white horses (19:11, 14); in the final judgment, God is seen seated on a white throne (20:11).”

White is a symbol of **purity** (Psalm 51:7; Psalm 45:3-5; Isaiah 1:18; Daniel 7:9; 12:10) and the apostolic church was a pure church both in **doctrine** and in **lifestyle**.

But white is also the color of **light** and light is a symbol of the **Word of God** (Matthew 17:2 [white as the light]; Psalm 119:105; compare Revelation 12:1 with Revelation 19:8 where the **white raiment** is the **glory of the sun**). This is the period when the church is the **light of the world** (Matthew 5:16).

The earliest church witnessed in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and unto the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:7, 8). This is made clear in Revelation 12:11 where we are told that they overcame (the very word “conquering” that is used in connection with the first seal) “by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives even unto death.” This horse is to be seen in **contrast** to the **black horse of darkness** where the word of God is barely giving its light during the dark ages.

Notice the following comment of Ellen White about the apostolic church:

*“The early Christians were indeed a **peculiar people**. Their **blameless deportment** and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their **character** and **doctrines** were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Savior--because the **purity** and **holiness** of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.” GC 46*

The Bow

II Kings 13:17 emphasizes that the bow and arrow represent God's **deliverance in battle**.

*“The arguments of the apostles alone, though clear and convincing, would not have removed the prejudice that had withstood so much evidence. But the **Holy Spirit** sent the arguments home to hearts with divine power. The **words of the apostles** [now that the seven spirits had been sent into all the earth (Revelation 5:6), the apostles shoot the arrows and the Spirit*

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*through the ministration of the angels guides them to the heart] were as **sharp arrows** of the Almighty, convicting men of their terrible guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory.”* AA 45

*“God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with **arrows of conviction**.”* DA 104

*“The **words of Christ** were as **sharp arrows**, which went to the mark and wounded the hearts of His hearers. Every time He addressed the people, whether His audience was large or small, His words took saving effect upon the soul of some one.”* GW 150, 151

*“The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The **Holy Spirit** could not work with him. His soul was encased in a self-righteous armor which the **arrows** of God, barbed and true-aimed by **angel hands**, failed to penetrate.”* COL 158

The Crown

The word for crown here is *stephanos*. With few exceptions the *stephanos* is the crown that is given to one who has gained the victory after a struggle (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; II Timothy 4:8; I Corinthians 9:24-27)

Conquering and to conquer

This expression could be translated “overcoming in order that he might overcome.” This expression must be connected with the seven churches where at the end of each message you have the dictum: “to him that overcomes.” It also must be connected with Revelation 5:5 where we are told that Jesus overcame.

The word *nikoon* in Revelation 6:2 and in the context of the seven churches is the same. Thus the white horse represents the **God’s faithful people in the churches who overcome**. This seems to indicate that the white horse represents the **faithful in the churches**.

The white horse symbolizes the apostolic church which went out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to **defeat the kingdom of Satan** and to extend the kingdom of Jesus. **Acts 2:41; 4:4** describes these remarkable conquests.

Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 1:8; Acts 17:6 tell us that the gospel was taken to the whole world (the word “world” (*oikoumene*) describes the inhabited world) in that generation.

Concerning this conquest, Ellen White states:

“The commission that Christ gave to the disciples, they fulfilled. As these messengers of the cross went forth to proclaim the gospel, there was such a revelation of the glory of God as had never before been witnessed by mortal man. By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the

apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation." AA 593

This was a **spiritual war**, a spiritual conquest of **human hearts** in the spiritual **enemy's territory** with a **spiritual armor** and **spiritual weapons** (Ephesians 6:10-18; Romans 13:11-14; II Corinthians 10:1-6; I Timothy 6:12; II Timothy 4:7, 8). This war has the purpose of conquering the territory of the devil. It involves God's people attempting to convince the devil's soldiers to desert his army by letting them know that he is a loser. God's people announce: "If you want to be a winner, come over to the Lord's side."

Revelation 19 depicts a **literal war**. After the latter rain has fallen and the whole world has been **polarized** into two groups by the final **preaching** of the gospel (Revelation 14:14-20), a **literal death decree** will be proclaimed against God's people. Jesus will then **literally take the battlefield** for his people and will **literally destroy their enemies** (Revelation 19:11-14). Revelation 19:11 again brings to view a **white horse and a rider who makes war against Satan and his armies**. The rider no longer has the *stephanos* but rather a *diademata* (19:12). The crown of the victor has become the **crown of the king**.

Second Seal: The Red Horse

Meaning: The Red Horse represents the persecutions against the church by **Imperial Rome**. It is parallel to the second church, Smyrna.

"When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come and see.' Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword." (Revelation 6:3, 4)

This is the period of the church of **Smyrna** where much death language is employed. The name Smyrna means "bittersweet myrrh". Myrrh was used to embalm the dead. Jesus presents Himself to this church as "the one who **was dead** and is alive forevermore (Revelation 2:8). Jesus encourages the members of Smyrna to be **faithful unto death** (Revelation 2:10) and promises that the faithful will not be hurt by the **second death** (Revelation 2:11). The ten days of Smyrna are the ten years of Diocletian's persecution from (303-313)

Ellen White's comments on the second seal are found in the chapter titled: "*Persecution in the first centuries*" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 39-48)

Symbols:

Color red

Represents **bloodshed** because the sword takes away peace from the earth and the result is **war and bloodshed** (Isaiah 63:2; Nahum 2:3; Revelation 17:1-6)

Sword

The sword represents **the Bible** (Hebrews 4:12, 13; Ephesians 6:17; Isaiah 49:2; Revelation 19:13, 15, 21). But the sword also represents the **civil power** (Romans 13:1-4). How do these swords relate to one another?

Time and again the Bible emphasizes that the preaching of the gospel brings **peace in its train** (Isaiah 9:6; Romans 10:15; Ephesians 6:15) If the sword here is the Bible, why does it take away peace rather than giving peace?

The conquests of the first horse lead to persecution under the second horse. The devil was **worried** by the many defections from his army and **now he kills** those who are conquering the subjects of his kingdom.

The gospel brings peace but it also takes away peace when people rise against it. The Sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12, 13) brings in its train the sword of persecution. How are we to understand this?

The key text is in **Matthew 10:34-39**. In this passage we have three key words that are found in the second seal: **earth, peace** and **sword**. The sword is here used against God's faithful people because they have preached the gospel of the Bible.

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 36 and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' 37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

*"The gospel is a message of peace. Christianity is a system which, received and obeyed, would spread **peace [key word in the second seal]**, harmony, and happiness throughout the earth. . . The gospel presents to them principles of life which are wholly at variance with their habits and desires, and they rise in rebellion against it. They hate the **purity [first seal]** which reveals and condemns their sins, and they persecute and destroy those who would urge upon them its just and holy claims. It is in this sense--because the exalted truths it brings occasion hatred and strife--that the gospel is called a **sword [key word in the second seal]**.
GC 46*

"The powers of earth and hell **arrayed themselves** [*war language*] against Christ in the person of His followers. Paganism foresaw that should the **gospel triumph** [*White horse war language*], her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her **forces** [*war language*] to destroy Christianity. The **fires of persecution** [*second seal*] were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." Hebrews 10:32. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony with their **blood** [*red*]. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike **slain** without mercy." GC 39, 40; see also GC 42 where the blood of Christians is spoken of as seed.

"In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence [*red horse*]. The great controversy [*war language*] in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful **standard-bearers** [*war terminology*] fell at their **post** [*war language*]. By defeat they **conquered** [*same word as in the white horse*]. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase [*the church went out conquering and to conquer*]." GC 41

"Thousands were imprisoned and slain, but others sprang up to fill their places. And those who were martyred for their faith were secured to Christ and accounted of Him as **conquerors** [*white horse language*]. They had fought the good fight, and they were to receive the **crown of glory** [*the victor's crown of the first seal*] when Christ should come." GC 42

"The early Christians were indeed a **peculiar** people. Their **blameless** deportment and unswerving faith were a continual **reproof** that **disturbed** the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a **terror** to evildoers wherever their **character** and **doctrines** were known. Therefore they were **hated** by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, **put to death** God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Savior--because the **purity** and **holiness** of His character was a constant **rebuke** to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the **hatred** and **opposition** of those who love and follow the ways of sin." GC 46

There are several instances in Scripture that illustrate this **pattern** of preaching the gospel followed by persecution.

Example # 1

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter and John brought healing to a paralytic (3:1-11). After healing him, Peter presented a sermon from God's word at Solomon's Portico (3:12-26). This grieved the religious leaders but brought in five thousand souls for the kingdom (4:1-4). Further preaching by Peter led to additional threats (4:5-22). In Acts 5:12 further preaching led to imprisonment threats (Acts 5:17-20). Peter and John were

called to trial again and spoke boldly (Acts 5:28-32) and as a result the leaders wanted to kill them (Acts 5:33). Then Gamaliel spoke some very wise words where he used warfare terminology:

*"And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot **overthrow** it--lest you even be found to **fight** against God."* (Acts 5:28-30) After this the Peter and John were beaten (Acts 5:40)

Example # 2

The story of Stephen is similar. In **Acts 7** Stephen preached a powerful sermon about the history of Israel culminating with the arrival of Jesus. When he finished his sermon, the listeners were **enraged** (Acts 7:51-60). His enemies could not silence his message with arguments so they **stoned him**. It is interesting to notice that Stephen was sustained by keeping His eyes on Jesus at the right hand of God. He died an overcomer (Acts 7:55, 56)

Example # 3

Ezekiel 36, 37 describe a powerful revival and reformation in Israel. Immediately following this revival, Gog and Magog come against Israel in chapters **38 and 39**.

Example # 4

Immediately after the three angels' messages have been proclaimed (**Revelation 14:6-12**) the wicked are arrayed against God's people around the Holy City (**Revelation 14:19, 20**)

Example # 5

After revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in **Joel 2:28-32** we have the gathering of the wicked for war in **chapter 3**. There is a pattern here. The preaching of the gospel brings persecution in its train.

It is significant that the **Roman Empire wielded the sword** (Romans 13:1-5). The Roman Empire killed **Peter** by crucifixion, **Paul** by decapitation and **James** with the **sword** (Acts 12:1, 2). It is important to note that the slaying of James with the sword come immediately after a description of the **great growth** of the church (Acts 11:21, 24)

Each one of the apostles was martyred except for John who was exiled to Patmos. When the church reached the end of this period, it was weary from persecution. It longed for a respite. Satan knew that the church was persecution weary and he had a strategy in place. The danger of compromise lurked around the corner.

Third Seal: The Black Horse

*"When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a **black** horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of **scales** in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of **wheat** for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the **oil** and the **wine**.'" (Revelation 6:5, 6)*

Historical Context

The **White Horse**: The victories of the early church

The **Red Horse**: The imperial persecutions

The **Black Horse**: Infiltration of the church by the world

Satan's **two methods** against God's people: (Abel and the flood story are examples) persecution and infiltration

The Parallel Church: Pergamum

The Historical Context:

Ephesus: The Apostolic church

Smyrna: The persecuted Church

Pergamum: The compromising church

This is the period of the church of **Pergamum**. **Satan's throne** was in Pergamum. This is the transition period when **Constantine**, the emperor of pagan Rome, gives his throne, power and authority to the papacy Pergamum is the **connecting link** between the **Roman Empire** and **Papal Rome** (Revelation 13:2). The restrainer is removed (study Romans 13:1-5 where the neuter and masculine are used) This is the period where the doctrine of **Balaam enters the church**. Balaam could not curse the church from **outside** so he infiltrated it with **idolatry** and **fornication**. These **two sins** were the very ones that the church embraced when persecution ceased (Numbers 23:8-10, 21-23; 25:1, 2)

Ellen White's Comments in The Great Controversy

Ellen White describes this period with the chapter titled: "**An Era of Spiritual Darkness**" (The Great Controversy, pp. 49-60; see especially pp. 55, 57, 60) Notice The Great Controversy and the war on the Bible (pp. 61, 62, 63).

Jesus is the Word (John 1:1-3) and where the Word is present there is **light and life** (John 1:4, 5; I John 1:5-7). The **color white** is identified with **light** (Psalm 104:1, 2 with Daniel 7:9; Matthew 17:2). The **written word** of God is **light** (Psalm 119:105). Actually the **white horse** represents **God's people** proclaiming the Word of God which is light to the world (**John 9:5; Matthew 5:16**). God's people are light and the word of God is light

Where the **Word of God is absent there is darkness (black)**. The way of the righteous is light and the way of the wicked is darkness:

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Proverbs 4:18, 19)

In the Bible **black is used synonymously with darkness**

Isaiah 50:3: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering."

Jude 13 [this verse uses blackness and darkness in the same verse] "These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; 13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

Proverbs 7:9 [this verse uses blackness and darkness in the same verse]. *"In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night"*

Jeremiah 4:28: *"For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it."*

Creatures of darkness roam and thrive in the darkness: **bats, rats, roaches, germs**. This horse is to be seen in **contrast** to the white horse. The white horse represents the light of God's word radiated by God's people. The black horse represents darkness which comes from a **waning** of God's word. Where God's word is not there is darkness. Black represents **sin, apostasy, error, heresy, human traditions**. During this seal there is a scarcity of the **showbread** in the holy place. In fact wheat and barley are extremely expensive.

When the word of God is suppressed there is darkness (**black**) as a result and finally hunger, pestilence and death (**fourth horse**).

Besides light, **bread** also symbolizes the Word of God (Matthew 4:4; Isaiah 55:2, 3, 10, 11; John 6:48-58, 63). Where there is no light and no bread there is death. **Amos 8:11, 12** predicts a time when there will be famine in the land, not for bread but for the word of God.

The **scales** have the purpose of **weighing grain**. This is not the scale of judgment. Wheat and barley were the **staple crops** from which bread was made in Israel. These are **very scarce** under this horse. There is **gathering famine which will intensify and bring death under the fourth horse**.

Revelation 6:6 speaks of a **scarcity of bread** because the wheat is extremely expensive. A denarius was the daily wage of a common laborer. Thus he made only enough for one quart

of wheat. According to **Cicero** the price mentioned by John would have been **8 to 16 times higher** than normal. It is clear that there is famine for bread in the land. Barley was used to feed the very **poor and the animals**. Interestingly, the next horse is the yellow one. After **famine comes death**.

"In ordinary times, a denarius would buy twenty-four choenixes of barley; but here a denarius will buy but three-the scanty allowance for a day's subsistence for a slave. The arrival of things at such a pass, accordingly argues a severity of hard times, distress, and want, almost beyond the power of imagination to depict." J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1998 by BibleSoft.

The **wine or libation** was a symbol of the blood of Jesus and the **oil** is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White makes the following important statement:

"In order to secure man to Himself and ensure his eternal salvation, Christ left the royal courts of heaven and came to this earth, endured the agonies of sin and shame in man's stead, and died to make him free. In view of the infinite price paid for man's redemption, how dare any professing the name of Christ treat with indifference one of His little ones? How carefully should brethren and sisters in the church guard every word and action lest they hurt the oil and the wine! How patiently, kindly, and affectionately should they deal with the purchase of the blood of Christ!" 5T 614

To hurt God's people is to hurt Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Zachariah 2:8; Matthew 25:40; Mark 9:41; Acts 9:4, 5)

Ellen White calls this an era of spiritual darkness

*"The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the **Dark Ages**. As her power increased, the **darkness** deepened." GC 55*

*"The **darkness** seemed to grow more dense." GC 57*

*"But 'the noon of the papacy was the **midnight** of the world.'--J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, b. 1, ch. 4. The **Holy Scriptures** were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests." GC 60*

*"The world had passed its **midnight** [because of Wycliffe]. The hours of **darkness** were wearing away, and in many lands appeared tokens of the coming dawn." GC 79*

It is significant that Ellen White dedicates three pages to the issue of the change of the Sabbath during this era of spiritual darkness (GC 52-54)

I John 2:8-11 explains that those who are in darkness hate their brother and want to kill him. The darkness of the third horse leads to death under the fourth horse.

Ellen White compares the church during this period with what happened at the time of Balaam:

"Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be deceived and led to displease God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would fall an easy prey." GC 42

*"The great adversary now endeavored to gain by **artifice** what he had failed to secure by **force [under the second seal]**. **Persecution** ceased [under the second seal], and in its stead were substituted the **dangerous allurements** of temporal prosperity and worldly honor. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some **concessions** on their part they proposed that Christians should make **concessions**, that all might unite on the platform of belief in Christ." GC 42*

*"Others were in favor of **yielding** or **modifying** some features of their faith and uniting with those who had accepted a part of Christianity [**a very real danger today**], urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. Under a **cloak** of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the **word of truth**." GC 43*

*"But there is no union between the Prince of **light** and the prince of **darkness**, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led **further and further from the truth**." GC 45*

*"The spirit of **compromise** and **conformity** was restrained for a time by the **fierce persecutions [red horse]** which the church endured under paganism. But as persecution [red horse] ceased, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions. The nominal conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, **cloaked** with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of **corruption** rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be **vanquished [language of the first seal]**, became the **conqueror [language of the first seal]**. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. GC 49, 50*

"In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in

their houses and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions." GC 51

Why is there no persecution today? Because we do not have the spirit and power of the early church:

*"There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a **revival** of the faith and power of the **early church**, and the spirit of **persecution** will be **revived**, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled. GC 48*

Fourth Seal: The Pale Horse

*"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, 'Come and see.' 8 So I looked, and behold, a **pale** horse. And the name of him who sat on it was **Death**, and **Hades** followed with him. And power was given to them over a **fourth** of the earth, to kill with **sword**, with **hunger**, with **death** [pestilence], and by the **beasts** of the earth." (Revelation 6:7, 8)*

Symbols and Expressions

- Color **pale** (*chloros*: The color of this horse is really a greenish pale as when a young shoot comes out of a tree. This paleness is the color of death)
- **Death** and **Hades** (the grave ultimately follows death)
- **Fourth part** of the earth (at this time the devastating power of the fourth horse and its rider is not universal)
- **Famine** (scarcity of God's word)
- **Pestilence** (in New Testament Greek the word *thanatos* technically means 'death'. But in 30 of the 50 times it appears in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) the Hebrew word *deber* is translated "pestilence". To say that the fourth horse kills with death would be redundant. Death by the sword and famine brings pestilence or disease in its train and ultimately leads to death and the grave.

- **Wild beasts** (wicked leaders and nations who were inimical to God's people and behaved like wild beasts)

The Old Testament Background

In Old Testament times, when Israel **broke the covenant** and **apostatized** from the truth, God would send the very same **four judgments** that are mentioned in connection with the fourth horse: **sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts** (see Leviticus 26:21-26; Ezekiel 14:21).

Because Israel was God's **literal people** in the **literal land** of Canaan, these judgments were literal. But under the fourth seal (as well as in the others) we are dealing with **spiritual Israel** in a **spiritual land** (the Christian church) and therefore we need to interpret these things in a **symbolic manner** (see Daniel 11:28, 30, 32 where we are told that the Papacy trampled on God's holy covenant during the 1260 years).

Interpreting the Symbols

Death and Hades

The immediate aftermath of death is the place where the dead go, the grave. The word *hades* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *sheol* and it should consistently be translated "the grave" (the link between the Hebrew and Greek words is found in I Corinthians 15:54, 55 [quoting Hosea 13:14] and Acts 2:25-27, 31 [quoting Psalm 16:8-10]). Unfortunately the Hebrew word *sheol* is mistranslated 31 times in the KJV as "hell".

In the Old Testament the concepts of death and the grave are regularly linked in synonymous parallelism (see Psalm 6: 5; 49:14, 15; 89:48; 116:3; Proverbs 5:25; 7:27; 15:25; Isaiah 38:18; 28:15; Amos 9:2; Hosea 13:14).

In the New Testament the word *hades* is used 12 times (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:25-27, 31; Revelation 1:17, 18; 6:8; 20:13-15; and should be translated "grave" in eleven of the twelve instances (with the exception of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:23 where Jesus is using their beliefs about *hades* to make a point).

The key question at this point is: What caused this church to die and go to the grave?

The Sword

The key verses are found in Romans 13:1-4 and Revelation 13:10, 14. More often than not when the sword of the Spirit convicts of sin (Hebrews 4:12, 13) the result is that the sword of persecution is used to suppress it (see for example Matthew 10:34-37).

Besides representing the Word of God, the sword is also linked with the **civil power** (Romans 13:1-4). It is no coincidence that the sword of Revelation 13:10, 14 was in the hands of the Papacy during the 1260 years.

In Revelation 6:8 we are told that power [a better translation would be 'authority'] **was given** to this horse to kill with the sword. Notably, we are told that the little horn **was given** power to make war against the saints and to overcome them (Daniel 7:25) Likewise Revelation 13:7 tells us that the beast **was given** power to make war against the saints and to overcome them. This connects the fourth rider with the Papal church.

Famine and Pestilence

In **symbolic terms** famine exists because the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Word of God is scarce. During the middle Ages there was no rain (Revelation 11:6; no Holy Spirit), therefore bread (the Word of God) was scarce and the result was famine (spiritual hunger). Famine in turn led to malnutrition and malnutrition led to pestilence and ultimately to spiritual death.

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a **famine** on the land, not a **famine** of bread, nor a thirst for **water**, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it." Amos 8:11, 12*

*"For as the **rain** comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but **water** the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:10-11*

*"Let my **teaching** drop as the **rain**, my **speech** distill as the **dew**, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass." Deuteronomy 32:2*

*"Let us know, let us pursue the **knowledge** of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; he will come to us like the **rain**, like the latter and former **rain** to the earth." Hosea 6:3*

The Wild Beasts

The wild beasts represent the hatred of the wicked for Christ and His people. Notice the following biblical examples:

Psalm 74:18, 19:

*"Remember this, that the **enemy** has reproached, O LORD, and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the **wild beast**! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever."*

Psalm 7:1, 2:

*"LORD my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me, lest they tear me like a **lion**, **rending me in pieces**, while there is none to deliver."*

Psalm 10:9-11:

*"He lies in wait secretly, **as a lion** in his den; he lies in wait to catch the poor; he catches the poor when he draws him into his net. So he crouches, he lies low, that the helpless may fall by his strength. He has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see."*

Psalm 17:9-12:

*"From the wicked who oppress me, from my deadly enemies who surround me. They have closed up their fat hearts; with their mouths they speak proudly. They have now surrounded us in our steps; they have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth, **as a lion** is eager to tear his prey, and like a young lion lurking in secret places."*

Psalm 22:12, 13:

*"Many bulls have surrounded Me; **strong bulls** of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, **like a raging and roaring lion**."*

Proverbs 28:15:

*"Like a **roaring lion** and a **charging bear** is a wicked ruler over poor people."*

Zachariah 10:3:

*"My anger is kindled against the **shepherds**, and I will punish the **goatherds** [literally the 'he-goats' but meaning 'the leaders' such as in the NIV]. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle."*

Acts 20:29:

*"For I know this, that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock."*

Matthew 7:15:

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**."*

Ellen White also understood that the wild beasts symbolize those who are inimical to Christ and His people.

*"From some hiding place among the tombs two madmen rush upon them as if to **tear them in pieces**. Hanging about these men are parts of chains which they have broken in escaping from confinement. Their flesh is torn and bleeding, their eyes glare out from their long and matted hair, the very likeness of humanity seems to have been blotted out. They look more like **wild beasts** than like men." The Ministry of Healing, p. 95*

*"No sooner were these words spoken than a rush was made for Christ. Like **wild beasts**, the crowd darted upon their **prey**. Jesus was dragged this way and that, Herod joining the mob in seeking to humiliate the Son of God. Had not the Roman soldiers interposed, and forced back the maddened throng, the Savior would have been **torn in pieces**." The Desire of Ages, p. 731*

*"When the condemnation of Jesus was pronounced by the judges, a satanic fury took possession of the people. The **roar** of voices was like that of **wild beasts**. They made a rush toward Jesus, crying, He is guilty, put him to death! And had it not been for the Roman soldiers, Jesus would not have lived to be hanged upon the cross of Calvary. He would have been **torn in pieces** before his judges, had not Roman authority interfered, and by force of arms withheld the violence of the mob." Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3, p. 122*

*"The symbols of earthly governments are **wild beasts**, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God." Review and Herald, August 18, 1896*

*"As the **ravenous beast** is rendered more furious by the taste of blood, so the rage of the **papists** was kindled to greater intensity by the sufferings of their victims." The Great Controversy, p. 76*

*"At this the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. They were more like **wild beasts of prey** than like human beings. They rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth." Sketches from the Life of Paul, p. 19*

On the death of Jerome: *"Their **thirst for blood**, whetted by the death of Huss, clamored for **fresh victims**. Only by an unreserved surrender of the truth could Jerome preserve his life. But he had determined to avow his faith and follow his brother martyr to the flames." The Great Controversy, p. 112*

In I Corinthians 15:32 Paul explained that he had fought wild beasts at Ephesus. Ellen White explains what Paul meant:

*"Paul informed the Corinthians of his trouble in Asia, where, he says, 'We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.' In his first epistle he speaks of fighting with **beasts** at Ephesus. He thus refers to the **fanatical mob** that clamored for his life. They were indeed more like **furious wild beasts** than men."* Sketches from the Life of Paul, p. 78

The Period of the Church of Thyatira

The period of the **fourth horse** is parallel to the period of the **fourth church** of Revelation, Thyatira. Jezebel was the central protagonist during this period. The Old Testament background to the church of Thyatira is found in the story of Elijah.

In the Old Testament story we are told that Jezebel employed the power of King Ahab (the sword) to extend her apostate syncretistic religion (I Kings 16:30-33). As a result, Israel apostatized from the covenant of God. This led to a severe drought where there was no rain for three and a half years (II Chronicles 7:13, 14; James 5:17). This drought led to famine and pestilence (I Kings 18:5) and the famine and pestilence in turn led to death and the grave.

For a time span of three and a half years Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of the Lord (I Kings 18:4) for not embracing her apostate syncretistic religion. She taught God's servants to fornicate and practice idolatry. Therefore the blood of God's servants and prophets cried out for justice (II Kings 9:7)

Prophetically this story of Jezebel was fulfilled during the period of the dominion of the little horn and the beast who massacred the saints of God for three and a half prophetic years (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7).

During this period the apostate church employed the sword of the state to kill dissenters and therefore the church was forced to flee to the wilderness where she was nourished in exile. This was the period when the two witnesses [the Old and New Testaments] prophesied in sackcloth [sackcloth is black] (Revelation 12:6; 13-15; 11:2).

For 1260 prophetic years the heavens were shut up and there was no rain (Revelation 11:6) and as a result there was spiritual famine and pestilence. The famine and pestilence ultimately led to death and to the grave.

This horse brought death and the grave for two reasons. First, because God's people died of **spiritual starvation** and **pestilence** (see Amos 8:11, 12) and second because they died by the **sword** (Revelation 13:10).

During this period the man of sin suppressed the Bible and forbade the lay people from reading it under pain of death. It was a capital crime even to have one in one's possession. As

a result there was famine for the word of God. This famine led to spiritual pestilence and pestilence led to death and the grave.

Concerning this time of famine Ellen White states:

*"For hundreds of years the circulation of the **Bible was prohibited**. The people were **forbidden to read it** or to have it in their houses and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions." The Great Controversy, p. 51*

*"From earliest childhood the youth [the Waldenses] were instructed in the Scriptures and taught to regard sacredly the claims of the law of God. **Copies of the Bible were rare** [the bread was scarce]; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testament." The Great Controversy, p. 76*

*"The work which the papacy had begun [during the 1260 years], atheism completed. The one [the papacy] **withheld from the people the truths of the Bible**; the other [the French Revolution] taught them to reject both the Bible and its Author. The seed sown by priests and prelates was yielding its evil fruit. 4SP 192*

The **Inquisition** (the sword of the state) was also established during this period to slay those who studied and obeyed the word of God. During this time the papal leaders **behaved as wild beasts** toward God's people.

Concerning the violence of this period Ellen White remarks:

*"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast 'his power, and his seat, and great authority.' Revelation 13:2. And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7. Christians were forced to choose either to yield their integrity and accept the papal ceremonies and worship or to wear away their lives in dungeons or **suffer death** by the rack, the fagot, or the headsman's ax. . . Persecution opened upon the faithful with greater fury than ever before, and **the world became a vast battlefield**." GC 54, 55*

*"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy-- **the Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the fearful record of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. 'Babylon the great' was 'drunken with the blood of the saints.' The mangled forms of millions of martyrs **cried to God for vengeance** [notice the allusion to the fifth seal] upon that apostate power. GC 59, 60*

*"The **persecutions** visited for many centuries upon this God-fearing people [the Waldenses] were endured by them with a patience and constancy that honored their Redeemer. Notwithstanding the crusades against them, and the **inhuman butchery** to which they were subjected, they continued to send out their missionaries to scatter the precious truth. They were **hunted to death**; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit." The Great Controversy, p. 78*

The Relationship between the Third, Fourth and Fifth Seals

The darkness and scarcity of bread under the third seal intensified under the fourth seal and led to death and the grave. Concerning this period, Ellen White explained: *"The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, **the darkness deepened**."* (The Great Controversy, p. 55)

When the church dies spiritually because she does not feed on the word of God she begins to destroy those who do not share her lack of spirituality. Those who cannot defend their doctrines with the spiritual sword (the Bible), will do so with the literal sword.

The martyrs who were slain under the period of the fourth horse cry out for God to judge and avenge their death. This is the period of the fifth seal which we shall study next time.

Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs

*"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the **altar** the **souls** of those who **had been slain** for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You **judge** and **avenge** our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a **white robe** was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should **rest** a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who **would be killed** as they were, was completed." (Revelation 6:9-11)*

Important Questions about this Passage

- What does the word '**souls**' mean and in what sense did the '**souls**' **cry out**?
- **Which altar** were these souls under?
- **Why were they killed** and what does the word '**martyr**' mean?
- **What period** of church history is this scene describing?
- What do the **white robes** represent?
- Why were the martyrs told to **rest for a season**?
- Is there **more than one group** of martyrs?
- When and how is their **plea answered**?

The Souls under the Altar

How can these souls be crying out **if they were killed**? Isn't this text clear proof that the soul lives independently from the body after death? Every commentator (except Seventh-day

Adventists) I consulted on this passage used it to try and prove that the soul lives on after the body is dead. But is this what the text is really saying?

The Old Testament Background: The Story of Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:3, 4: *“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the **fruit** of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the **firstlings** of his flock and of the **fat** thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”*

Both Cain and Abel brought an **offering** to place on the **altar of sacrifice**. Abel offered an animal sacrifice and thus **obeyed** God and **worshiped** as God had commanded. He was righteous. The central issue of the story was obedience and worship.

Hebrews 11:4: *“By faith Abel offered unto God a **more excellent sacrifice** than Cain, by which he obtained **witness** (marturia) that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being **dead yet speaketh**.”*

Abel's sacrifice gave witness that he was righteous and even after his death the sacrifice speaks.

Genesis 4:8: *“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and **slew him**.”*

Satan was the **ultimate cause** of Abel's death (I John 3:12). A **great travesty** in justice had been committed. The blood of Abel was shed **at the foot of the altar** and **cried out for vindication** and justice. It appeared like the unrighteous **won** and righteous **lost**. At some point the record needed to be **rectified**.

Genesis 4:10: *“And he said: What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's **blood crieth unto me from the ground**.”*

According to **Hebrews 12:24** the blood of Jesus **speaks** more powerfully than that of Abel. Thus it is the blood that speaks: “And [we have come] to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that **speaketh** better things than that of Abel.”

The blood of Abel **cried out** for Justice while the blood of Jesus **provided** that justice.

The cries of the righteous martyrs can be better understood by reading **Psalm 79** where God's people are crying out for justice.

Further Old Testament Background: The Blood under the Altar of Sacrifice

There were **two altars** in the sanctuary: The altar of **sacrifice** (in the court) and the altar of **incense** (in the holy place). Which of these is here referred to? Let's take a closer look at the **Old Testament sacrificial service** to answer this question.

Leviticus 4:7: *“And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation: and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”* (cf. Leviticus 4:18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9)

- The blood of the sacrifice was poured out at the **base of the altar** of sacrifice.
- At the altar of **incense no blood** was offered, only incense was placed there.
- The expression “**poured out**” is used to describe what the wicked did with the blood of the righteous (Revelation 16:6).
- The word “**slain**” is identical to the one used in Revelation 5:6 to describe the sacrifice of Jesus as a lamb on the cross.
- The altar of sacrifice represents **Christ's sacrifice on earth** so these souls must be crying out on earth, not in heaven.

In the Old Testament the words ‘**soul**’ and ‘**blood**’ are very closely linked. When innocent blood (the life) is shed, it cries out for justice.

Leviticus 17:11: *“For the **life** [nephesh] of the flesh is in the **blood**: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”* (see also Genesis 9:4)

Deuteronomy 12:23: *“Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the **blood** is the **life** [nephesh]; and thou mayest not eat the **life** [nephesh] with the flesh.”*

The Bible describes the death of the righteous at the hands of the wicked as an oblation or offering. In **John 16:2** Jesus explained that those who would slay His followers would actually believe that they were offering God an act of worship. The word “service” in this text is *latrein* (where we get the word **idolatry** from) which is generally translated ‘service’ in the KJV but actually means ‘worship’.

In **Revelation 16:6** we are told that the wicked **poured out** the blood of God's people. Once again, this is sacrificial terminology (see Leviticus 8:15; Matthew 23:35; 26:28; 22:20 where the word ‘shed’ is used of sacrifices).

Significantly Paul refers to his death as a **pouring out** of sacrifice (II Timothy 4:6-8). The death of the righteous at the hands of the wicked was a sweet savor unto God because it revealed the faithfulness of His people (cf. Ephesians 5:2) and won many souls to the kingdom. People thought: "If this truth is worth dying for, then it must be worth living for."

The Reason for their Martyrdom

We are told that the martyrs were slain for the **word of God** and for the **testimony which they held**. The word of God refers to their **teachings** and the testimony which they held describes their practical **life witness** that revealed the character of Jesus. The word '**martyr**' means 'one who gives witness or testimony.' The meaning of this word can be clearly discerned in **Revelation 12:11** where we are told that the faithful of God overcame the devil by the **word of their testimony** and they did not love their lives even unto death.

The word 'testimony' is translated 'martyr' in three New Testament texts. Paul speaks of Stephen as God's martyr (witness) in **Acts 22:20**. Stephen was killed because he revealed Jesus Christ in his sermon and in his demeanor (cf. Acts 6:15 and chapter 7). In **Revelation 2:13** Jesus spoke of Antipas as "my faithful martyr (witness), who was slain among you." **Revelation 17:6** speaks of the harlot who was filled with the blood of the 'martyrs' of Jesus.

Ellen White described **Paul's words and demeanor** as He spoke the word of God before kings and rulers:

*"When before kings and dignitaries of the earth, who held his life in their hands, he quailed not; for he had given his life to God, and it was hid in Christ. He **softened**, by his **courtesy**, the hearts of these men in power, men of fierce temper, wicked and corrupt though they were in heart and life. He did not forget his position, or the importance of the occasion. He was **zealous for the truth, bold in advocating Christ**; but propriety of deportment, the **grace of true politeness**, marked all his conduct. When he stretched out his hand, as was his custom in speaking, the clanking chains caused him no shame or embarrassment. He looked upon them as tokens of honor, and rejoiced that he could suffer for the **word of God** and the **testimony of Jesus Christ**. Surrounded by philosophers, kings, and critics, he was God's ambassador. His reasoning was so clear and convincing that it made the profligate king tremble as Paul dwelt upon his experience, showing what had wrought the change in his religious views which aroused the malice of the Jews. He **exalted Jesus Christ** as the world's Redeemer. **Grace**, like an angel of mercy, makes his voice heard **sweet and clear**, repeating the story of the cross, the matchless love of Jesus." Review and Herald, September 8, 1885*

These meaning of these two expressions ('Word of God' and 'testimony of Jesus') can best be understood when we look at the experience of the **apostle John**. We are told in **Revelation 1:2, 9** that John was a prisoner on Patmos **because** of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Regarding this, Ellen White comments:

"John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor that his words had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his wisdom and

eloquence. But the **more convincing his testimony**, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was filled with rage. He could neither dispute the **reasoning** of Christ's faithful advocate, nor match the **power** that attended his **utterance of truth**; yet he determined that he would silence his voice. AA 569

Ellen White then explains that John was cast by Domitian into a **cauldron of scalding oil** but his life was preserved by the Lord and the emperor then sent him into exile on the Isle of Patmos. He was thus on **Patmos** for the Word of God and the testimony that he held. Clearly the martyrs were slain because they revealed Jesus in their words and in the lives.

The Fifth Seal and the Little Book of Revelation 5

The martyrs who were slain by the inquisition during the **fourth** seal cry out for justice under the **fifth** seal. Let's read once again an Ellen White statement that links the fourth and fifth seals:

*"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy—the **Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, **taking the fearful record** of their iniquitous decrees and **writing the history of deeds** too horrible to appear to human eyes. "Babylon the great" was "drunken with the blood of the saints." The mangled forms of millions of martyrs **cried to God for vengeance** [notice the allusion to the fifth seal] upon that apostate power. GC 59, 60*

It will be noticed that the angels kept a **careful record** of the wrongful decisions of earthly courts against God's people. Notice two other statements where Ellen White writes about the **heavenly record keeping**:

*"The history of God's people during the ages of darkness that followed upon Rome's supremacy **is written in heaven**, but they have **little place in human records**. Few traces of their existence can be found, except in the accusations of their persecutors. It was the policy of Rome to obliterate every trace of dissent from her doctrines or decrees. **Everything heretical, whether persons or writings, she sought to destroy**. Expressions of doubt, or questions as to the authority of papal dogmas, were enough to forfeit the life of rich or poor, high or low. **Rome endeavored also to destroy every record of her cruelty toward dissenters**. Papal councils decreed that books and writings containing such records should be committed to the flames. Before the invention of printing, books were few in number, and in a form not favorable for preservation; therefore there was little to prevent the Romanists from carrying out their purpose. GC 61, 62*

"When Rome at one time determined to exterminate the hated sect [the Waldenses], a bull was issued by the pope, condemning them as heretics, and delivering them to slaughter. They were not accused as idlers, or dishonest, or disorderly; but it was declared that they had an appearance of piety and sanctity that seduced "the sheep of the true fold." Therefore the

pope ordered "that malicious and abominable sect of malignants," if they "refuse to abjure, to be crushed like venomous snakes."—Wylie, b. 16, ch. 1. Did this haughty potentate expect to meet those words again? Did he know that **they were registered in the books of heaven, to confront him at the judgment?**" GC 77

The question is, **when** will these church leaders have to face the records that were written by the angels during the Middle Ages? The answer is in the following statement:

"There [outside the New Jerusalem after the millennium] are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers of the church** have an **account to render to God** from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that **Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people**; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40. GC 668

All the iniquitous acts that were committed against God's people during the middle Ages were written in the **books of heaven**. One day this record will be opened before the universe and God will judge and avenge the blood of those who died unjustly. That is to say, God will rectify the erroneous judgments made in earthly courts. The Supreme Court of the universe will reverse the decisions of the lower courts on earth. The wicked priests, prelates and popes will see the book opened and they will remember everything they did to God's people. Then they will confess before the universe that they were wrong and God's people were right.

These records are found in the book of **Revelation 5:1, 2**. Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will open the book after the millennium and the wicked will be reminded of their evil deeds toward the righteous.

The book also contains the record of what the **Jewish leaders did to Jesus**:

"Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness **this decision will appear before them** in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah." COL 294

This decision will appear before the Jewish leaders after the millennium when they are outside the Holy City:

"The awful spectacle appears **just as it was**. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor recalls the part** which he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist;

the weak, timeserving Pilate; the mocking soldiers; the priests and rulers and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"—all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming: "He died for me!" GC 667

The Two Stages of the Fifth Seal

The text makes it clear that the crying out of the martyrs has **two distinct historical stages**. That is to say, there are two groups of martyrs—one from the past and the other from the future. When was the first group slaughtered?

The First Stage of the Martyrs

The first stage of the martyrs is described in **Daniel 7:25**. We are told there that the little horn wore out the saints of the Most High for three and a half times:

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

This same time period is described in **Revelation 13:5, 7** as forty-two months during which the beast (the same power as the little horn), made war with the saints and overcame them:

"And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."

The First Stage during the middle Ages

The **first four churches** are parallel to the first four seals:

- **White Horse:** The apostolic church (Ephesus)
- **Red Horse:** The church persecuted by the Roman emperors (Smyrna)
- **Black Horse:** The compromising church during the time of Constantine the Great (Pergamum)
- **Pale Horse:** The church of the middle Ages (Thyatira)

The Fourth Seal and the Church of Thyatira

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee; because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel [the harlot], which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication [with the kings of the earth], and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space [three and a half times or 42 months] to repent of her fornication; and

she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a **bed** [the deadly wound], and them that **commit adultery** with her into **great tribulation** [the French Revolution], except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her **children** [apostate Protestantism] with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts [the investigative judgment]: and I will give [the reward] unto every one of you **according to your works.**" (Revelation 2:20-23)

II Kings 9:22: "And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered: What peace, so long as the **whoredoms** of thy mother Jezebel and her **witchcrafts** are so many?"

I Kings 18:4: "For it was so, when Jezebel **cut off** the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water."

James 5:17: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for **three years and six months.**"

II Kings 9:7: "And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may **avenge the blood** of my servants the prophets, and **the blood** of all the servants of the LORD, **at the hand** of Jezebel."

In contrast to the white robes Jesus promised to the faithful, notice what was placed on **John Huss** just before his martyrdom. This travesty in justice will be rectified when the case of Hus is evaluated in the heavenly court. A verdict will be pronounced in his favor and against his wicked oppressors:

"The vestments were removed one by one, each bishop pronouncing a curse as he performed his part of the ceremony. Finally "they put on his head a cap or pyramidal-shaped miter of paper, on which were painted frightful figures of demons, with the word 'Archheretic' conspicuous in front. 'Most joyfully,' said Huss, 'will I wear this crown of shame for Thy sake, O Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns.'" GC 108

The Deadly Wound Concluded the First Stage of the Martyrs

Revelation 13:10: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." (cf. Revelation 13:14)

Romans 13:1-4 explains that the sword symbolizes the civil power of Rome. During the three and a half times or forty-two months the little horn (the beast) used the sword of the state to slay God's people. But the same sword of the state wounded the little horn (the beast) at the end of this time period.

The First Group of Martyrs Rested before 1798

The martyrs are told to rest. The word 'rest' here refers to the sleep of death. In fact, our word 'cemetery' comes from the Greek word *coimaterion* which means "a place to sleep." By the way, we get the word 'comatose' from *coimaterion*.

Revelation 6:11: *"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled [complete]."*

Revelation 14:13: *"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'"*

Matthew 26:45: *"Then He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.'"*

The Second Stage of the Martyrs

Revelation 13:3 tells us that the deadly wound of the beast will be healed and then the beast will behave as it did in the past.

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. **The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated.** In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.] **Scenes similar to those** described in these words will take place." Manuscript Releases, volume 13, p. 394 (Letter 103, 1904)*

*"The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a **restoration of her power.** "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Verse 3. The Great Controversy, p. 579*

*"When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else that **giving life** [which means that it must have been dead] to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to **spring again** [which means that the active despotism must have existed before] into active despotism." 5T 712*

"When the land which the Lord provided as an asylum for his people, that they might worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, the land over which for long years the shield of Omnipotence has been spread, the land which God has favored by making

it the depository of the pure religion of Christ,--when that land shall, through its legislators, abjure the principles of Protestantism, and give countenance to Romish apostasy in tampering with God's law,--it is then that the final work of the man of sin will be revealed. Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the Papacy; by a national act enforcing the false Sabbath, they will **give life and vigor** [which means that the corrupt faith of Rome must have been dead for a period] to the corrupt faith of Rome, **reviving** [which means that her tyranny and oppression of conscience were dead for a while] her tyranny and oppression of conscience. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth." Signs of the Times, June 12, 1893

Revelation 13:11, 12, 15: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the **first beast before him** and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to **worship the first beast** whose deadly wound was healed. . . And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the **image of the beast should be killed.**"

Revelation 17:1, 6: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the **great whore** [just like Jezebel] that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication [just like with Jezebel]. . . And I saw the woman drunken with the **blood of the saints** [just like Jezebel], and with the **blood of the martyrs of Jesus**: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."

Revelation 18:23: "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your **sorcery** [translated 'witchcraft' in Galatians 5:20] all the nations were deceived."

Revelation 19:1, 2: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God for **true and righteous** are his **judgments**: for he **hath judged** the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and **hath avenged the blood** of his **servants at her hand.**" (cf. Revelation 18:20, 24)

Revelation 20:4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw **the souls** of them that were **beheaded** for the **witness of Jesus**, and for the **word of God** and which had not **worshipped the beast**, neither his **image**, neither had received **his mark** upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and **they lived** and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The White Robes: What are they and when were they given?

The conferral of the white robe is another way of expressing that the martyrs **formed a character fit for heaven**. In the investigative judgment the martyrs who were faithful to Jesus and died for him will be vindicated before the universe. It will be revealed that they had the white robes of Christ's righteousness when they died. The investigative pre-advent judgment will not confer the robe but will rather reveal that the martyrs had it when they died. When Jesus returns He will then literally clothe the martyrs in white robes of light.

Matthew 22:11, 12 explains that the robe is assigned to the faithful **before** the investigative judgment. The purpose of the investigative judgment is to ascertain whether people had the white robe of Christ's righteousness. In other words, the robe is given *in absentia*. **Revelation 3:5** assures those who overcome that they will literally be robed in literal white garments.

When the judgment is finished the awesome pronouncement will be made: "He who is unjust, let him be unjust [continue to act unjustly] still; he who is filthy [notice the laundry analogy], let him be filthy [continue to act filthily] still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous [continue to act righteously] still; he who is holy, let him be holy [continue to behave in a holy manner] still." (Revelation 22:11). There will no longer be the opportunity to wash the robes of character.

Revelation 7:13: *"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes [stole], and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

*"When Christ shall come, he will not change the character of any individual. Precious, probationary time is given to be improved in washing our **robes of character**, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb."* Counsels on Education, p. 237

*"The resurrection and ascension of our Lord is a sure evidence of the triumph of the saints of God over death and the grave, and a pledge that heaven is open to those who wash their **robes of character** and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Jesus ascended to the Father as a representative of the human race, and God will bring those who **reflect His image** to behold and share with Him His glory."* The Faith I Live By, p. 51

*"The provision has been made for us to wash. The fountain has been prepared at infinite expense, and the burden of **washing rests upon us**, who are imperfect before God. The Lord does not propose to remove these spots of defilement **without our doing anything** on our part. **We must wash our robes** in the blood of the Lamb. We may lay hold of the merits of the blood of Christ by faith, and through His grace and power we may have strength to overcome our errors, our sins, our imperfections of character, and come off victorious, having washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb. 3T 183*

"The assaults of Satan are strong, his delusions are subtle; but the Lord's eye is upon His people. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but Jesus will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. Their earthliness will be removed, that through them the image of Christ may be perfectly revealed." PK 589

After the judgment process is over and God's people have been vindicated then the church will be seen in the white robes:

Revelation 19:6-8: *"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (cf. Ephesians 5:25-27)*

Daniel 7 and 8 and the Two Stages of the Martyrs

According to Daniel seven and eight, during the three and one half times the little horn cast down the place of the sanctuary, arose against the Prince of the host, took away the daily and threw down the stars/saints. And we are informed that the little horn **prospered**.

In **Daniel 8:13** the question is asked [the same question as Revelation 6:9-11]: **"Until when** will the sanctuary and the host be trampled?" In other words, when will things be reversed? In 1844 God would begin to reverse the erroneous decisions of earthly courts. The judgment would begin with the dead (including the martyrs of the middle Ages) and those who were slain would be given a white robe and told to rest until the rest of the martyrs die as they did. Then both groups will be rewarded together at the same time when the harlot is punished.

The words 'judge' and 'avenge' do not refer to the same event. Judging implies the **trial** while avenging refers to the **punishment** after the sentence is announced. In the judgment the verdict is given in favor of the saints and against their oppressors. When Jesus comes the verdict will actually be enforced by rewarding the saints and punishing their wicked oppressors.

The entire argument of Daniel 7 is based on this idea. The little horn wore out the saints but the judgment set, the books were opened, the verdict was given in favor of the saints and the time came when they received the kingdom. That is to say, the little horn did its will "until" (Daniel 7:21, 22) the judge came. The little horn persecuted (7:25), the ancient of days came (7:26) and then the kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:27) The persecution under the fifth seal thus parallels the great tribulation of Matthew 24 the period of the church of Thyatira, and the war that the little horn and the beast waged upon the saints of God during the three and one half times (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7)

In short, the chronological sequence of the fifth and sixth seals is as follows:

The martyrs of the middle Ages were slain and their innocent blood cried out for justice and vindication. Beginning in 1844 as the case of each one of them was examined, they were assigned white robes (vindicated in the judgment) and told to rest (sleep during death) until the number of the rest of the martyrs is complete. The rest of the martyrs will be slain when the Roman Catholic papacy returns to power because they refuse to worship the beast and his image and to receive the mark. The end-time martyrs will then be judged and assigned white robes. Finally at the coming of Jesus both groups of martyrs will be avenged and rewarded with eternal life while their wicked oppressors will be punished with death by the plagues (Revelation 19:1, 2; 20:4; 11:18)

The Relationship between the Fifth and Sixth Seals

The first part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12, 13) is the judging part of the fifth seal and the second part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:14-17) is the avenging part of the fifth seal. In between we have the parenthesis of Revelation 7:1-8, the sealing of the righteous living. The martyrs and the 144,000 are two distinct groups. The martyrs are judged first and then the 144,000 living saints will be judged last.

The answer to plea of both groups of martyrs is found in Revelation 19:1, 2. The avenging took place during the period of the seven last plagues, particularly when the wicked had to drink blood (Revelation 16:5-7) In Revelation 20:4 this same group is given the right to judge their wicked oppressors. At this point they must have received their reward.

The persecution of the little horn during the middle Ages (Daniel 8:11-13) leads to the question: "Until when". Signs in the heavens announce the beginning of the judgment process (Revelation 6:12-13) Daniel 8:14 begins the process of judging to answer the pleas of the martyrs of the past.

Daniel 11:44 describes the end time martyrs when the papacy resurrects from its deadly wound. In Daniel 12:1 the judgment ends, signs are seen in the heavens revealing that the judgment has ended (Matthew 24:30), Babylon comes to its end (Daniel 11:45) and God's people are delivered and rewarded (Daniel 12:2)

Ellen White and the Timing of the Fifth Seal

Some are troubled by the fact that Ellen White seems to place the fulfillment of the fifth seal in the future from her day. Though most of her statements refer to the future it is not by any means true that she exclusively puts this seal in the future. As we have noticed, in GC 59, 60 she applied the cries of the martyrs to the past. The majority of her statements will be quoted here and then an explanation will be provided.

The Cries of the Martyrs from the Past

"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy-- the Inquisition. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In

their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the fearful record of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. "Babylon the great" was "drunken with the blood of the saints." **The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance upon that apostate power.** GC 59

The Cry of the Future Martyrs

"When the defiance of God's law is almost universal, when his people are pressed in affliction by their fellow men, God will interpose. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, which they held,**--then the prayer will ascend from every true child of God: "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." The fervent prayers of his people will be answered; for God loves to have his people seek him with all the heart, and depend upon him as their deliverer. He will be sought unto to do these things for his people, and he will arise as their protector and avenger. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" The Review and Herald, December 21, 1897

"Roman Catholic principles will be taken under the care and protection of the state. This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin. The protest of Bible truth will be no longer tolerated by those who have not made the law of God their rule of life. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ which they held;** then the prayer will ascend from every true child of God, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." Review and Herald, June 15, 1897

"Millions have gone down to the grave loaded with infamy because they refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By **human tribunals** the children of God have been adjudged the vilest criminals. But the day is near when "God is judge Himself." (Ps. 50:6). **Then the decisions of earth shall be reversed.** "The rebuke of His people shall He take away." Isa. 25:8. **White robes will be given to every one of them.** (Rev. 6:11.)" Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 179, 180

"When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.

As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return. The people of God will then be plunged into

those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble. **The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven.** And as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: "**How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**" Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 451

Why does Ellen White place the fulfillment of the fifth seal in the future? The simple reason is that the fifth seal has both a **past** and a **future** fulfillment just like the Roman Catholic Papacy has two stages of dominion, one past (the 1260 years) and the other future (when the deadly wound is healed). The past fulfillment was when the martyrs died during the middle ages and the future fulfillment is when persecutions of the past are revived.

Daniel 11 and the Cry of the Martyrs

Ellen White refers to two stages of persecution in the experience of God's people:

"It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a repetition of the persecutions of the past are blended." Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, p. 16.

Remarkably this statement is presented in the context of the prophecy of Daniel 11 which also has two stages for the persecutions of God's people. Daniel 11:31-39 highlights the persecution of God's people during the middle ages and verses 40-45 focus on the persecution of the end-time martyrs when the loud cry is announced.

Sixth Seal: Signs of the Judgment

Revelation 6:12-17

"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood [not darkened]. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late [unripe] figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth [rulers who occupy thrones], the great men [high officers of the state], the rich men [socially wealthy], the commanders [commanders of armies], the mighty men [great men in battle], every slave and every free man [regular citizens], hid themselves [they are found naked according to Genesis 3:8; Revelation 16:15] in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us [Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30] from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand [Ephesians 6:14; I Peter 5:12; Luke 11:18]?"

Are the Signs Literal or Symbolic?

As Adventists we take much of what Revelation says symbolically. Why, then, do we understand the earthquake and the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars to be literal? The answer is found in the meaning of a Greek word that is used four times in Revelation 6:12, 13, the word “as” (*hos*).

Ranko Stefanovic says about the meaning of this word:

“ . . . the repeated usage of the word ‘as’ or ‘like’ (Gr. hos) in the text appears to be very significant. The sun becomes black as sackcloth, the moon as blood, the stars of the sky fall as do the figs of the fig tree, and heaven splits as the papyrus scroll. In Greek, this word ‘introduces a figurative analogy to an actual event’ which is compared with something figurative. This suggests that these heavenly signs are intended to be taken literally.” (Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 244)

The Link between the Fifth and Sixth Seals

The plea of the martyrs of the middle ages (“how long until you judge?”) in Revelation 6:10 is answered in Daniel 7:8-10; 8:13, 14 where the process of judgment begins. According to these passages in Daniel, the trampling of the sanctuary and of God’s people would last until the conclusion of the 2300 days where the process of vindicating the sanctuary and its worshipers would begin. The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 are the announcement that the vindicating judgment is about to begin.

It is noteworthy that the **sixth church** (open door to the most holy place), **sixth seal** (sealing the 144,000) and **sixth trumpet** (the vision of the Ark of the Covenant) all point to the events connected with the investigative judgment in the most holy place of the sanctuary.

There are two earthquakes in the sixth seal. One is at the beginning of the sixth seal and the other is at its end. The one at the beginning is described in verse 12 and the one at the end is described in verse 14. This second earthquake is further amplified in Revelation 16:18, 20 where it is described as of cataclysmic proportions. In other words, the earthquake in Revelation 6:14 is the same one as in Revelation 16:18, 20 where the context is the seventh plague. The earthquake in 6:12 is the not the greatest in the history of the world like the one in 16:18. Only the greatest earthquake in history could remove mountains and islands from their places on a global scale.

Purposes of the Signs

The signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 play several specific functions. **First**, they announce that the great tribulation is about to end (Matthew 24:29). **Second**, they serve as an omen of the fall of the papal power. **Third**, they serve to draw attention to the approaching judgment in 1844. **Fourth**, they serve as indicators of the beginning of the time of the end. **Finally**, they announce the soon coming of Jesus.

Some critics within and without the church argue thus: "How can you believe that events that took place 252, 227 and 174 years ago are signs of the soon coming of Jesus? Isn't this stretching credulity to its limit?" On the surface this argument seems persuasive until we look at the number of these years from a broader perspective.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that I am going to take a six thousand mile trip. When I start the trip we would all agree that my destination is far off. When I am halfway there, the destination is still far off. But would you agree that when I am 252 miles from my destination, or 227 miles from my destination or 174 miles from my destination I am near?

C. Mervyn Maxwell in his excellent book, Magnificent Disappointment, pp. 91, 92 puts 1844 and the nearness of the second coming in perspective:

"We need a change of perspective. Instead of looking back to 1844 and finding it around 150 years in the past, let us go back to the beginning of human history and view 1844 as almost six thousand years in the future. . . From the perspective of Eden at the beginning of earth's six thousand years, the remaining distance between 1844 and the 1990s is hardly discernible. These 150 years between 1844 and the 1990s represent only one-fortieth, 2.5 percent, of human history. More than 97 percent of human history took place prior to 1844. Yes, we are indeed in the end time. The final judgment began only yesterday, as it were. Christ's second advent is coming soon."

The enemies of Adventism and of Ellen White have frequently pointed out that there have been other great earthquakes, dark days and star showers in history. What makes the Lisbon earthquake, the Dark Day of 1780 and the Leonid Star Shower of 1833 unique? The answer is fourfold: **Location, order, time and intensity.**

- With regards to **location** it is not coincidental that these signs appeared in **Europe** and in the **United States**. Europe, because there the deadly wound would be given to the papacy and this would mark the end of the tribulation of 1260 days. The United States, (especially New England) because there the message of the judgment would be proclaimed powerfully by the Millerites beginning in the 1830s. C. Mervyn Maxwell well states:

"The location of the classic signs was highly significant. They happened in Europe and America primarily, where people were studying the Bible and pondering the prophecies. A dark day in the Sahara Desert or a star shower over New Guinea would have said little in those days about the second coming of Christ to cannibal headhunters or Muslim nomads. Events need not be universal to deliver a global message. A few square miles at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were sufficient to announce the atomic age. A stable in Bethlehem ushered in the Christian era. Only a few hundred people saw Jesus after His resurrection—but they told others." Magnificent Disappointment, pp. 93, 94.

- With respect to **order**, these phenomena occurred in history in the precise chronological order in which they are described in Revelation 6. The Lisbon earthquake occurred in 1755, the Dark Day and moon like blood occurred in 1780 and the star shower took place in 1833. Show me one other instance in human history where these phenomena have taken place in this precise order within a period of less than one hundred years!
- These signs also occurred precisely at the right **time**, precisely before the tribulation of the 1260 years came to an end and immediately before the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the fall of the papacy (1798) and the beginning of the judgment (1844)
- Concerning the **intensity** of these signs C. Mervyn Maxwell has well stated:

"As recently as 1980, the widely respected seismologist, G. A. Eiby, in chapter 11 of his Earthquakes, ranked the Lisbon earthquake as 'the largest shock ever' and reckoned that it may well have reached an almost incredible 9.0 on the Richter scale, seven times stronger than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. . . The dark day of May 19, 1780 has not been equaled in North America in the two hundred years that have since come and gone. The Leonid shower of November 13, 1833 gave birth to a new branch of astronomy. . . Like the Lisbon earthquake and the famous dark day, it too has not been matched, in spite of the scientific expectations that it would be."
Magnificent Disappointment, p. 93

Ellen White and the Sixth Seal

The first part of the sixth seal is in The Great Controversy, pp. 304, 333. On page 304 Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12 and on page 333 she quotes Revelation 6:13. She does not quote Revelation 6:14-17 (the second part of the sixth seal) until pages 641, 642. In order to comprehend this long parenthesis between the first and last part of the sixth seal, we must remember some things we studied under the fifth seal:

- The **papacy** has **two stages of power—one past** (during the 1260 years) **and one future** (at the very end of time).
- Therefore the **tribulation** also has **two stages—one past and one future**. The past stage is the greatest in history with regards to length. The future stage is the greatest with regards to intensity. Regarding the first period of persecution Ellen White remarks:

"For more than a thousand years such persecution as the world had never before known was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain." DA 631

- The **signs in the heavens** also have **two stages**. The first group of cosmic signs announces the end of the first period of tribulation and the soon-to-begin “judging” portion of the fifth seal. The second set of cosmic signs announces the end of the second tribulation period and the “avenging” portion of the fifth seal. In between these two points of time you have the vindicating judgment of the martyrs and the sealing of the 144,000 living saints.
- The first stage of the signs took place in **1755, 1780 and 1833**. These signs showed that the **first stage** of persecution by the papacy was **coming to an end** and that the vindicating **judgment** was about to begin. These signs are referred to in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31
- The second stage of the signs will take place immediately before the second coming of Jesus and will mark the deliverance of the saints from the **second stage** of persecution by the papacy. These signs are described in Revelation 6:14-17.

Two Sets of Signs

Will the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 have another fulfillment in the future? Absolutely not! In Joel 2:31 and in Revelation 6:12, 13 we have two important details that distinguish these signs from the ones in the future: **First**, according to Joel 2:31 the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 occur “**before**” the great and terrible day of the Lord. **Second**, in the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 the moon is turned into **blood** and the **stars fall** from heaven while in the signs of Revelation 6:14-17 the moon and the stars do not give their light.

There is a **second** set of signs in the heavenly bodies which will be fulfilled when Jesus comes and they are found in Joel 2:10, 11; 3:15, 16 and in Matthew 24:30: These signs take place as Jesus is preparing to leave heaven for earth. His coming is announced by the sun and moon being darkened and the stars not giving their light. There will also be a cosmic, global earthquake in heaven and on earth to announce His departure from heaven. The two sets of signs are different.

- **Revelation 6:12-13**. In these verses we are told that the moon became **like blood**, not that it was darkened. We are also told that the stars fell from heaven. These are not the same signs as those in Matthew 24 where the sun, moon and stars are moved out of their places.
- The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 are **similar to those in Joel 2:31** (also Acts 2:20). Notice that the sun is darkened and the moon is turned into blood, **before** the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.
- **Joel 2:10, 11** depicts **different signs** than those in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31: In the Joel passage the earth and the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars do not shine. These signs **immediately** precede the second coming of Jesus.

- **Joel 3:15, 16:** Once again we notice that these are not the signs spoken of in Revelation 6:12, 13. Once again we are told that the heavens and the earth will **shake** and the sun and moon will be **dark** and the stars will **not shine**. The stars sure did shine on November 13, 1833!
- **Isaiah 13:10-13:** This passage is not parallel to Revelation 6:12, 13. Here the sun, the moon and the stars are **darkened**. These things did not happen in 1755, 1780 and 1833. Notice that the heavens and the earth will be removed from their places.
- Notice that Revelation 6 presents the signs in the **very order** in which they occurred: An **earthquake** (1755), the darkening of the **sun** (1780), the **moon** becoming like **blood** (1780), and the **stars falling** from heaven (1833)
- **Inevitable conclusion:** The signs in Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20 and Revelation 6:12, 13 are different than those in Matthew 24:30; Joel 2:10, 11; Joel 3:15, 16 and Isaiah 13:10ff.
- There is a difference between the expression "**the time of the end**" and "**the end of time**." Whereas the signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 announce that we are entering upon the **time of the end**, the signs in Matthew 24:30 reveal that we have reached the **end of time**. Notice the entire passage of Matthew 24:29-31:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

- Who are the powers of the heavens in Matthew 24:29? **Genesis 1:16** tells us that the sun was made to **rule** the day and the moon and the stars were made to **rule** the night. Early Writings, p. 41 explains very well what will happen with the heavenly bodies when Jesus comes:

*"The powers of heaven are the sun, moon, and stars. They rule in the heavens. The powers of earth are those that rule on the earth. The powers of heaven will be shaken at the voice of God. Then the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the voice of God." **Early Writings**, p. 41*

The reason why the earth will be **without form** and **void** during the millennium is because of the global earthquake and the reason why the heavens will have **no light** is because the sun, the moon and the stars will be moved out of their orbits.

Ellen G. White and the Signs

- As we have stated before, Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12, 13 in The Great Controversy, p. 304, 333 and applies them to the signs that took place in 1755, 1870 and 1833.
- She does not quote Revelation 6:14-17 until **pages 641, 642**:
"The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place." (And then she quotes verses 15-17)
- Why does she **separate verses 12, 13 from verses 14-17** by over three hundred pages? Simply because she knew there was a long **parenthesis** of time between the events that are depicted in these passages.
- The principle is that there are **signs which mark the end of the two stages of the tribulation**. In both cases the signs indicate that God has intervened to **deliver his people and to bring the tribulation to an end**—in the first instance from the oppression of the 1260 years and in the second instance from the oppression of the Time of Jacob's Trouble.
- This must be understood in the context of the fifth seal. In the fifth seal there are **two groups of martyrs**, one past and one future. The **signs in the sixth seal** (6:12, 13) are an announcement that the **oppression of the first group of martyrs is about to come to an end**. The signs of 6:14-17 are an announcement that the **oppression of the second group of martyrs is about to come to an end** because God's people are going to be delivered by the voice of God which causes the cosmic, global earthquake and moves the sun, the moon and the stars out of their places

Let's take a careful look at how Ellen White explains the signs of 1755, 1780 and 1833:

*"Prophecy not only foretells the manner and object of Christ's coming, but presents tokens by which men are to know when it is near. Said Jesus: 'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.' Luke 21:25. 'The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.' Mark 13:24-26. The revelator thus describes the **first of the signs to precede the second advent**: 'There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.' Revelation 6:12." GC 304*

The Meaning of Luke 21:25, 26

What about the signs in Luke 21:25, 26? Let's quote the verses in question:

*"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the **sea and the waves roaring**; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the **powers of heaven will be shaken**."*

- These verses are frequently used by evangelists to describe the present turmoil in the world. But a close look at the context indicates that these verses are describing what will occur at the very end of human history immediately before the second coming of Jesus.
- We must be careful not to take these verses out of their context. They are not referring to **simple distress** among the nations today. They are actually referring to the **distress which comes as a result of the sun, moon and stars being moved out of their places**.
- GC 613-634: Ellen White describes **the Time of Trouble** such as never was in the history of the world. This is parallel to **Matthew 24:29**
- In GC 635-637 she describes the signs in the sun, moon and stars in the chapter titled **God's People Delivered**. This is parallel to **Matthew 24:30**. She is following the **same order** as Matthew 24:29-31 where we have the great tribulation and the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars.
- **God's voice shakes** the heavens and the earth.

*"The **mountains shake** like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The **sea is lashed into fury**. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells **like the waves of the sea**. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. **Mountain chains** are sinking. **Inhabited islands** disappear. The **seaports** that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters."*

Here Ellen White is using the language of **Luke 21:25, 26** to describe what will take place when God's people will be delivered at the second coming. One is reminded of the **tsunami that hit Lisbon after the great earthquake**.

*There are troublous times before us; the judgments of God are coming upon our world. The nations of the earth are to tremble. There will be trials and **perplexities** on every hand; men's hearts **will fail them for fear**. And what shall we do in that day? Though the earth shall **reel to and fro** like a drunkard, and be removed like a cottage, if we have made God our trust, He will deliver us." Sons and Daughters of God, p. 354*

- A few pages later Ellen White describes the arrival of Jesus and the sending of His angels to gather His elect (GC 645). This is the very next event in **Matthew 24:31**.

The Great Lisbon Earthquake

Great Lisbon earthquake occurred on November 1, 1755 at about 9:40 in the morning. The five cathedrals were full of worshipers who were celebrating All Saints' Day. The initial shock lasted about 2 minutes and is estimated to have reached an intensity of 9.0 on the Richter scale. There were actually three shocks over a ten minute period, the second of which was the strongest. The second shock lasted about three and a half minutes. The initial shock demolished most of the city and killed thousands. People who escaped the collapsing buildings fled to the open waterfront thinking it safer only to be engulfed forty minutes later by a 60 foot tsunami.

Sir Charles Lyell reported that gigantic fissures tore through the center of Lisbon some of which were as wide as 15 feet. Fire mysteriously leaped out of cracks in the ground. It is estimated that some 90,000 persons perished in Lisbon alone. But in North Africa the cities of Fes and Meknes were also leveled with a high loss of life. The quake was felt as far away as Strasbourg (1100 miles away). Rivers and lakes were disturbed all the way to Scandinavia some 1500 to 2000 miles away. At about 6 p.m. a tsunami hit the island of Barbados in the Caribbean, some 4000 miles away.

The earthquake destroyed 85% of the buildings in Lisbon and about 90,000 persons died. There were two major aftershocks on December 11 and 23 causing additional death and suffering. The cataclysm was felt over a region of 1.3 million miles in Europe and Africa. Thousands died in Morocco and Algeria.

Ellen G. White describes the Lisbon earthquake

"Prophecy not only foretells the manner and object of Christ's coming, but presents tokens by which men are to know when it is near. Said Jesus: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Luke 21:25. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Mark 13:24-26. The revelator thus describes the first of the signs to precede the Second Advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12.

These signs were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century. In fulfillment of this prophecy there occurred, in the year 1755, the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded. Though commonly known as the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in Greenland, in the West Indies, in the island of Madeira, in Norway and Sweden, Great Britain and Ireland. It pervaded an extent of not less than four million square miles. In Africa the shock was almost as severe as in Europe. A great part of Algiers was destroyed; and a short distance from Morocco, a

village containing eight or ten thousand inhabitants was swallowed up. A vast wave swept over the coast of Spain and Africa engulfing cities and causing great destruction.

It was in Spain and Portugal that the shock manifested its extreme violence. At Cadiz the inflowing wave was said to be sixty feet high. Mountains, "some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were, from their very foundations, and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the adjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains."-- Sir Charles Lyell, Principles of Geology, page 495.

At Lisbon "a sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes sixty thousand persons perished. The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet or more above its ordinary level." "Among other extraordinary events related to have occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe, was the subsidence of a new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, as a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface." Charles Lyell, Principles of Geology, page 495.

"The shock" of the earthquake "was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holyday, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped." Encyclopedia Americana, article, "Lisbon," note (ed. 1831). "The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying, 'Misericordia! The world's at an end!' Mothers forgot their children, and ran about loaded with crucified images. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin." It has been estimated that ninety thousand persons lost their lives on that fatal day." The Great Controversy, pp. 304, 305

The Testimony of other Authors

"The Lisbon earthquake of Nov. 1, 1755, appears to have put both the theologians and philosophers on the defensive ... At twenty minutes to ten that morning, Lisbon was firm and magnificent, on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the world, - a city of superb approach, placed precisely where every circumstance had concurred to say to the founders: Build here! In six minutes the city was in ruins ... Half the world felt the convulsion ... For many weeks, as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm, relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one more night." James Parton, Life of Voltaire, volume 2, pp. 208, 209

"The effects were distributed over very nearly four millions of square English miles of the earth's surface, and greatly surpassed anything of the kind ever recorded in history." J. Nourse in The History and Philosophy of Earthquakes, London, (1757), p. 334

"Almost all the palaces and large churches were rent down, or part fallen, and scarce one house of this vast city is left habitable. Everybody that was not crushed to death ran out into the large places, and those near the river ran down to save themselves by boats, or any other floating convenience, running, crying, and calling to the ships for assistance; but whilst the multitude were gathered near the riverside, the water rose to such height that it overflowed the lower part of the city, which so terrified the miserable and already dismayed inhabitants, who ran to and fro with dreadful cries, which we heard plainly on board, that it made them believe the dissolution of the world was at hand; everyone falling on his knees and entreating the Almighty for His assistance ... By two o'clock the ships' boats began to ply, and took multitudes on board ... The fear, the sorrow, the cries and lamentations of the poor inhabitants are inexpressible; every one begging pardon, and embracing each other, crying. Forgive me, friend, sister! Oh! What will become of us! Neither water nor land will protect us, and the third element, fire, seems now to threaten our total destruction! As in effect it happened. The conflagration lasted a whole week." Letter of a ship's captain to a ship's owner in, Thomas Hunter, Historical Account of Earthquakes, (1756) pp. 72-74

"The shock (of the earthquake) was instantly followed by the fall of every church and convent, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, fires broke out in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that the city was completely desolated. The earthquake happened on a holiday, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of them escaped. ... The terror of the people was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, beating their faces and breasts, crying, 'Misericordia! The world's at an end!'" Encyclopedia Americana, article, "Lisbon" (1831 edition)

"In Africa, this earthquake was felt almost as severely as it had been in Europe. A great part of the city of Algiers was destroyed. Many houses were thrown down at Fez and Mequinez, and multitudes were buried beneath their ruins. Similar effects were realized in Morocco. Its effects were likewise felt at Tangier, at Tetuan, at Funchal in the Island of Madeira; ... it is probable ... that all Africa was shaken by this tremendous convulsion. At the North, it extended to Norway and Sweden; Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain, and Ireland were all more or less agitated by the same great and terrible commotion of the elements." Robert Sears, Wonders of the World, p. 58.

Sir Charles Lyell wrote the following graphic description of the event:

"In no part of the volcanic region of Southern Europe has so tremendous an earthquake occurred in modern times as that which began on the 1st of November, 1755, at Lisbon. A sound of thunder was heard under ground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about six minutes, sixty thousand persons

perished. The sea retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising fifty feet above ordinary level. ... Among other extraordinary events related to have occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe was the subsidence of a new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, at a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface. Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, p. 495

"The mountains of Arrabida, Estrella, Julio, Marvan, and Cintra, being some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were, from their very foundations; and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the subjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains, which are supposed to have been electric; they are also said to have smoked; but vast clouds of dust may have given rise to this appearance ... The great area over which this Lisbon earthquake extended is very remarkable. The movement was most violent in Spain, Portugal, and the north of Africa; but nearly the whole of Europe, and even the West Indies, felt the shock on the same day. A seaport called St. Ubes, about twenty miles south of Lisbon, was engulfed. At Algiers and Fez, in Africa, the agitation of the earth was equally violent, and at the distance of eight leagues from Morocco, a village, with the inhabitants to the number of about eight or ten thousand persons, together with all their cattle, were [was] swallowed up. Soon after, the earth closed again over them. The shock was felt at sea, on the deck of a ship to the west of Lisbon, and produced very much the same sensation as on dry land. Off St. Lucar [s], the captain of the ship 'Nancy' felt his vessel shaken so violently that he thought she had struck the ground, but, on heaving the lead, found a great depth of water. Captain Clark, from Denia, in latitude 36° 24' N., between nine and ten in the morning, had his ship shaken and strained as if she had struck upon a rock. Another ship, forty leagues west of St. Vincent, experienced so violent a concussion that the men were thrown a foot and a half perpendicularly up from the deck. In Antigua and Barbados, as also in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Corsica, Switzerland, and Italy, tremors and slight oscillations of the ground were felt. The agitation of lakes, rivers, and springs in Great Britain was remarkable. At Loch Lemmond, in Scotland, for example, the water, without the least apparent cause, rose against its banks, and then subsided below its usual level. The greatest perpendicular height of this swell was two feet four inches. It is said that the movement of this earthquake was undulatory, and that it traveled at the rate of twenty miles a minute. A great wave swept over the coast of Spain, and is said to have been sixty feet at Cadiz. At Tangier, in Africa, it rose and fell eighteen times on the coast; at Funchal, in Madeira, it rose full fifteen feet perpendicular above high-water mark, although the tide, which ebbs and flows there seven feet, was then at half ebb. Besides entering the city and committing great havoc, it overflowed other seaports in the island. At Kinsale, in Ireland, a body of water rushed into the harbor, whirled round several vessels, and poured into the market-place." A.R. Spofford and Charles Gibbon, *The Library of Choice Literature*, Vol. VII, pp. 162, 163

The Dark Day

Ellen White's Description:

"Twenty-five years later appeared the next sign mentioned in the prophecy--the darkening of the sun and moon. What rendered this more striking was the fact that the time of its fulfillment had been definitely pointed out. In the Savior's conversation with His disciples upon Olivet, after describing the long period of trial for the church,--the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which He had promised that the tribulation should be shortened,--He thus mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when the first of these should be witnessed: "In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." Mark 13:24. The 1260 days, or years, terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Following this persecution, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.

"Almost, if not altogether alone, as the most mysterious and as yet unexplained phenomenon of its kind, . . . stands the dark day of May 19, 1780,--a most unaccountable darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in New England." R. M. Devens, Our First Century, page 89.

An eyewitness living in Massachusetts describes the event as follows: "In the morning the sun rose clear, but was soon overcast. The clouds became lowery, and from them, black and ominous, as they soon appeared, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and a little rain fell. Toward nine o'clock, the clouds became thinner, and assumed a brassy or coppery appearance, and earth, rocks, trees, buildings, water, and persons were changed by this strange, unearthly light. A few minutes later, a heavy black cloud spread over the entire sky except a narrow rim at the horizon, and it was as dark as it usually is at nine o'clock on a summer evening. . . .

"Fear, anxiety, and awe gradually filled the minds of the people. Women stood at the door, looking out upon the dark landscape; men returned from their labor in the fields; the carpenter left his tools, the blacksmith his forge, the tradesman his counter. Schools were dismissed, and tremblingly the children fled homeward. Travelers put up at the nearest farmhouse. 'What is coming?' queried every lip and heart. It seemed as if a hurricane was about to dash across the land, or as if it was the day of the consummation of all things.

"Candles were used; and hearth fires shone as brightly as on a moonless evening in autumn. . . . Fowls retired to their roosts and went to sleep, cattle gathered at the pasture bars and lowed, frogs peeped, birds sang their evening songs, and bats flew about. But the human knew that night had not come. . . .

"Dr. Nathanael Whittaker, pastor of the Tabernacle church in Salem, held religious services in the meeting-house, and preached a sermon in which he maintained that the darkness was supernatural. Congregations came together in many other places. The texts for the

extemporaneous sermons were invariably those that seemed to indicate that the darkness was consonant with Scriptural prophecy. . . . The darkness was most dense shortly after eleven o'clock." The Essex Antiquarian, April, 1899, vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 53, 54. "In most parts of the country it was so great in the daytime, that the people could not tell the hour by either watch or clock, nor dine, nor manage their domestic business, without the light of candles. . . ."

"The extent of this darkness was extraordinary. It was observed as far east as Falmouth. To the westward it reached to the farthest part of Connecticut, and to Albany. To the southward, it was observed along the seacoasts; and to the north as far as the American settlements extend."--William Gordon, History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the U.S.A., vol. 3, p. 57.

The intense darkness of the day was succeeded, an hour or two before evening, by a partially clear sky, and the sun appeared, though it was still obscured by the black, heavy mist. "After sundown, the clouds came again overhead, and it grew dark very fast." "Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object was discernible but by the help of some artificial light, which, when seen from the neighboring houses and other places at a distance, appeared through a kind of Egyptian darkness which seemed almost impervious to the rays."--Isaiah Thomas, Massachusetts Spy; or, American Oracle of Liberty, vol. 10, No. 472 (May 25, 1780). Said an eyewitness of the scene: "I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete."--Letter by Dr. Samuel Tenney, of Exeter, New Hampshire, December, 1785 (in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 1792, 1st series, vol. 1, p. 97). Though at nine o'clock that night the moon rose to the full, "it had not the least effect to dispel the deathlike shadows." After midnight the darkness disappeared, and the moon, when first visible, had the appearance of blood.

May 19, 1780, stands in history as "The Dark Day." Since the time of Moses no period of darkness of equal density, extent, and duration, has ever been recorded. The description of this event, as given by eyewitnesses, is but an echo of the words of the Lord, recorded by the prophet Joel, twenty-five hundred years previous to their fulfillment: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Joel 2:31

Christ had bidden His people watch for the signs of His advent and rejoice as they should behold the tokens of their coming King. "When these things begin to come to pass," He said, "then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." He pointed His followers to the budding trees of spring, and said: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:28, 30, 31." The Great Controversy, pp. 306-309

Other Authors Weigh In

The great astronomer **Herschel** states: *"The dark day of North America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain."*

Samuel Williams who did extensive scientific research of the dark day had this to say:

*"The **time** of this extraordinary darkness was May 19, 1780. It came on between the hours of ten and eleven A. M., and continued until the middle of the next night, but with different appearances at different places. . .*

*The **degree** to which the darkness arose was different in different places. In most parts of the country it was so great that people were unable to read common print, determine the time of day by their clocks or watches, dine, or manage their domestic business, without the light of candles. In some places the darkness was so great that persons could not see to read common print in the open air, for several hours together; but I believe this was not generally the case.*

*The **extent** of this darkness was very remarkable. Our intelligence in this respect is not so particular as I could wish; but from the accounts that have been received, it seems to have extended all over the New England States. It was observed as far east as Falmouth [Portland, Maine]. To the westward we hear of its reaching to the furthest parts of Connecticut, and Albany. To the southward it was observed all along the seacoasts, and to the north as far as our settlements extend. It is probable it extended much beyond these limits in some directions, but the exact boundaries cannot be ascertained by any observations that I have been able to collect.*

*With regard to its **duration**, it continued in this place at least fourteen hours; but it is probable this was not exactly the same in different parts of the country.*

*The **appearance and effects** were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull and gloomy. Candles were lighted up in the houses; the birds, having sung their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; the fowls retired to roost; the cocks were crowing around, as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night." Samuel Williams, Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to the End of the Year 1783, (1785) volume 1, pp. 234, 235*

"The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light. . . I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. A sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes, was equally invisible with the blackest velvet." Samuel

Tenney, in Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society for the year 1792, volume 1, pp. 97, 98

"The extent of the darkness was very remarkable ... From the accounts that have been received it seems to have extended all over the New England States. It was observed as far east as Falmouth [Portland, Maine]. To the westward, we hear of its reaching to the furthest parts of Connecticut, and Albany. To the southward, it was observed all along the seacoasts. And to the north as far as our settlements extend." William Gordon, History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the U.S.A., Vol. III, p. 57

"With regard to its duration, it continued in this place at least fourteen hours: but it is probable this was not exactly the same in different parts of the country. The appearance and effects were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull and gloomy. Candles were lighted up in the houses; the birds having sung their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; the fowls retired to roost; the cocks were crowing all around as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night." Samuel Williams, An Account of a Very Uncommon Darkness in the States of New England, May 19, 1780 in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston, 1785, pp. 234-246

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780 -- so-called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England ... The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till the middle of the next night, but with difference and duration in different places ... The true cause of this remarkable phenomena is not known." Noah Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, Vocabulary of the Names of Noted ... Persons and Places, ed. 1869, 1882 & 1883

"About eleven o'clock the darkness was such as to demand our attention, and put us upon making observations. At half past eleven, in a room with three windows, twenty-four panes each, all open toward the southeast and south, large print could not be read by persons of good eyes." Samuel Tenney, in Collections of the Massachusetts's Historical Society for the Year 1792, Vol. I, pp. 97-98

"About one o'clock a glint of light which had continued to this time in the east, shut in, and the darkness was greater than it had been for any time before ... We dined about two, the windows all open, and two candles burning on the table. In the time of the greatest darkness some of the ... fowls went to their roost. Cocks crowed in answer to one another as they commonly do in the night. Woodcocks, which are night birds, whistled as they do only in the dark. Frogs peeped. In short, there was the appearance of midnight at noonday." Correspondent's report from Ipswich Hamlet, Massachusetts, Boston's Gazette and Country Journal, May 29, 1780

"Perhaps it never was darker since the children of Israel left the house of bondage. This gross darkness held till about one o'clock, although the moon had fullled but the day before." Report from Salem, Boston's Gazette and Country Journal, May 30, 1780

"During the whole time a sickly, melancholy gloom overcast the face of nature. Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, no object was discernible, but by the help of some artificial light, which when seen from the neighboring house and other places at a distance, appeared through a kind of Egyptian darkness, which seemed almost impervious to rays." Isaiah Thomas, Massachusetts Spy; or 'American Oracle of Liberty, Vol. 10, No. 472, May 25, 1780

"This unusual phenomenon excited the fears and apprehensions of many people. Some considered it as a portentous omen of the wrath of Heaven in vengeance denounced against the land, others as the immediate harbinger of the last day, when 'the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.' The Boston Independent Chronicle of June 8, 1780 quoted from Thomas's Massachusetts Spy. See also 'Some Memorials of Edward Lee' in The Publications of the American Tract Society, Vol. XI, p. 376

"Various have been the sentiments of people concerning the designs of Providence in spreading the unusual darkness over us. Some suppose it portentous of the last scene. I wish it may have some good effect on the minds of the wicked, and that they may be excited to prepare for that solemn day." The Boston Independent Chronicle of June 8, 1780 quoted from Thomas's Massachusetts Spy. See also 'Some Memorials of Edward Lee' in The Publications of the American Tract Society, Vol. XI, p. 376

"That the darkness was not caused by an eclipse is manifest by the various positions of our system at that time; for the moon was more than one hundred fifty degrees from the sun all that day." Dr. Samuel Stearns, who had been appealed to because of his knowledge in "philosophy and astronomy", in a letter printed in the Independent Chronicle, June 22, 1780.

Dr. Stearns continues in good King James English:

"The primary cause must be imputed to Him that walketh through the circuit of heaven, who stretcheth out the heaven like a curtain, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind. It was He, at whose voice the stormy winds are obedient, that commanded these exhalations to be collected and condensed together, that with them He might darken both the day and the night; which darkness was, perhaps, not only a token of His indignation against the crying iniquities and abominations of the people, but an omen of some future destruction." Dr. Samuel Stearns, who had been appealed to because of his knowledge in "philosophy and astronomy", in a letter printed in the Independent Chronicle, June 22, 1780

"The legislature of Connecticut was then in session in Hartford. A very general opinion prevailed that the Day of Judgment was at hand. The House of Representatives, being unable to transact their business, adjourned. A proposal to adjourn the council [a second legislative body called the Governor's Council] was under consideration. When the opinion of Colonel Davenport was asked, he answered, 'I am against an adjournment. The day of judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.'" Timothy

Dwight of Yale College, contemporary, wrote this account according to John W. Barber, Connecticut Historical Collections, p. 403

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780 - so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England ... The true cause of this phenomenon is not known. ... The dark day in Northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read of with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain." Gage's History of Rowley, Massachusetts

The Falling of the Stars

It began between two and four o'clock in the morning and continued until daybreak. It extended all over North America and as far south as Mexico and the Island of Jamaica.

Lucy Reese lived in Lookout Georgia on November 13, 1833. She says: *"I was fourteen years old at the time the stars fell. It seemed to me like a shower of rain. The people were greatly frightened, and there was much reading of the Bible because they thought the judgment had come."*

Rose Grace was living in Marion, Alabama: *"I was seventeen years old when the stars fell. I watched them a long time. They appeared to go out when they were about ten feet from the ground. Everybody thought that the judgment day had come. I told them if that was so it was too late to pray."*

Henry Lewis, a slave of Harrisburg, Kentucky was nineteen years old at the time: *"It seemed as if the starry heavens were coming down. I was about twelve miles from home with a horse I had stolen from my master, but when I returned they were all so excited and engaged in prayer that I slipped the horse into the stable and escaped detection."*

Caroline Walker of Vicksburg Mississippi: *"The world looked like it was all in a light blaze, and continued so until the day began to dawn. From every direction on the plantation I could hear screams, and cries that the judgment day had come. It was an awful night."*

Richmond Smith of Vicksburg, Mississippi: *"I was living at that time in Putnam County, Georgia. Was nineteen years old. Was awakened by the voice of one crying, 'The time is come.' Everybody felt that it was the judgment and that the end of the world had come."*

Sanford Williams was living in Louisville, Kentucky: *"I was playing the violin for a dance at the time. One of the ladies went to the door, and screamed, 'the judgment, the judgment day is come,' and fainted. Another ran to the door, and said about the same words and fell lifeless. Then I went to the door, playing my violin as I went. When I saw the stars all falling, I threw down my violin and cried, 'O Lord, O Lord, have mercy on me and save me this night and I will serve you until I die.' In every direction I could hear men, women, and children screaming 'The judgment day is come.'"*

Professor Olmstead, of Yale College says: "The meteors did not fly at random over all parts of the sky, but appeared to emanate from a point in the constellation of Leo, near a star called Gamma Leonis, in the bend of the sickle.

"After collecting and collating the accounts given in all the periodicals of the country, and also in numerous letters addressed either to my scientific friends or to myself, the following appeared to be the leading facts attending the phenomenon. The shower pervaded nearly the whole of North America, having appeared in nearly equal splendor from the British possessions on the north, to the West India Islands and Mexico on the south, and from sixty one degrees of longitude east of the American coast, quite to the Pacific Ocean on the west. Throughout this immense region, the duration was nearly the same. The meteors began to attract attention by their unusual frequency and brilliancy, from nine to twelve o'clock in the evening; were most striking in their appearance from two to five; arrived at their maximum, in many places, about four o'clock; and continued until rendered invisible by the light of day." Denison Olmstead, The Mechanism of the Heavens, p. 328

Thomas Milner, the English Scientist, who called the 'Falling of the Stars' the most splendid on record (p. 139):

"In many districts, the mass of the population were terror-struck, and the more enlightened were awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the apocalyptic image - that of the stars of heaven falling to earth, even as a fig tree casting her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Thomas Milner, The Gallery of Nature, London, 1852, p. 140. See also "The Old Countryman", in Portland's Evening Advertiser, November 26, 1833

"On the night of November 12-13, 1833, a tempest of falling stars broke over the earth. North America bore the brunt of its pelting. From the Gulf of Mexico to Halifax, until daylight with some difficulty put an end to the display, the sky was scored in every direction with shining tracks and illuminated with majestic fireballs." Agnes M. Clerke, History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century, (1902) p. 328, 329

"Once for all, then, as the result of the star fall of 1833, the study of luminous meteors became an integral part of astronomy." Agnes M. Clerke, History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century, (1902) p. 329

"In many districts, the mass of the population were terror-struck, and the more enlightened were awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the apocalyptic image—that of the stars of heaven falling to the earth, even as a fig tree casting her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Rev. Thomas Milner, The Gallery of Nature, (1852), p. 140

"Though there was no moon, when we first beheld them their brilliancy was so great that we could, at times, read common-sized print without much difficulty, and the light which they afforded was much whiter than that of the moon, in the clearest and coldest night, when the ground is covered with snow. The air itself, the face of the earth, as far as we could behold it,—all the surrounding objects, and the very countenances of men, wore the aspect and hue

of death, occasioned by the continued, pallid glare of these countless meteors, which in all their grandeur flamed 'lawless through the sky.' Letter from Bowling Green, Missouri, to Professor Silliman, in American Journal of Science and the Arts, volume XXV (1834), p. 382

"In any direction, the scene could not be compared more aptly to anything than a distant shower of fire, whose particles were falling sparsely to the earth. Frequently one larger and more luminous than the rest would shoot across the heavens producing a flash like vivid lighting. Towards the approach of daylight the sky began to be obscured with clouds, and these substances appeared less frequent, but did not disappear till long after the light of the morning had arisen, and were seen as long as stars were visible." New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette (semiweekly), volume 1, number 104, Concord, Saturday, November 16, 1833.

"Probably the most remarkable of all the meteoric showers that have ever occurred was that of the Leonids, on the night [night following] November 12, 1833. The number at some stations was estimated as high as 200,000 an hour for five or six hours. 'The sky was as full of them as it ever is of snowflakes in a storm,' and, as an old lady described it, looked 'like a gigantic umbrella.' [Page 469]. . .

In 1864 Professor Newton of New Haven showed by an examination of the old records that there had been a number of great meteoric showers in November, at intervals of thirty-three or thirty-four years, and he predicted confidently a repetition of the shower on November 13 or 14, 1866. The shower occurred as predicted, and was observed in Europe; and it was followed by another in 1867, which was visible in America, the meteoric swarm being extended in so long a procession as to require more than two years to cross the earth's orbit. Neither of these showers, however, was equal to the shower of 1833. The researches of Newton, supplemented by those of Adams, the discoverer of Neptune, showed that the swarm moves in a long ellipse with a thirty-three-year period.

A return of the shower was expected in 1899 or 1900, but failed to appear, though on November 14-15, 1898, a considerable number of meteors were seen, and in the early morning of November 14-15, 1901, a well-marked shower occurred, visible over the whole extent of the United States, but best seen west of the Mississippi, and especially on the Pacific Coast. At a number of stations several hundred Leonids were observed by the eye or by photography, and the total number that fell must be estimated by tens of thousands. The display, however, seems to have nowhere rivaled the showers of 1866-1867, and these were not to be compared with that of 1833." Charles A. Young, Ph. D. (Professor of Astronomy at Princeton University) Manual of Astronomy, (1902), pp. 471, 472

"Scientific study of the orbits of shooting stars began after the occurrence of the most brilliant meteoric shower on record,—that of November 13, 1833. This spectacle which excited the greatest interest among all beholders, and was looked upon with consternation by the ignorant, many of whom thought that the end of the world had come, was witnessed generally throughout North America, which happened to be the part of the earth facing the meteoric storm. Hundreds of thousands of shooting stars fell in the course of two or three

hours. Some observers compared their number to the flakes of a snowstorm, or to the raindrops in a shower." *The Encyclopedia Americana*, article: "Meteors or Shooting Stars."

"I witnessed this gorgeous spectacle, and was awe-struck. The air seemed filled with bright descending messengers from the sky. It was about daybreak when I saw this sublime scene. It was not without the suggestion at that moment that it might be the harbinger of the coming Son of man; and in my state of mind I was prepared to hail him as my friend and deliverer. I had read that the stars should fall from heaven, and they were now falling: I was suffering much in my mind, and I was beginning to look away to heaven from the rest denied me on earth." Testimony of a slave: Frederick A. Douglass. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book*, p. 164

"Everybody felt that it was the judgment, and that the end of the world had come." and "In every direction I could hear men, women, and children screaming, 'The judgment day is come!'" "The attention of astronomers in Europe, and all over the world, was, as may be imagined, strongly roused by intelligence of this celestial display on the Western continent." Rev. Thomas Milner, *The Gallery of Nature*, London, (1852), p. 141.

"The morning of November 13, 1833, was rendered memorable by an exhibition of the phenomenon called shooting stars, which was probably more extensive and magnificent than any similar one hitherto recorded. ... Probably no celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with so much admiration and delight by one class of spectators, or with so much astonishment and fear by another class. For some time after the occurrence, the 'meteoric phenomenon' was the principal topic of conversation in every circle." Denison Olmsted, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Yale College, in the *American Journal of Science and Arts*, Vol. XXV, (1834), pp. 363-364.

The astronomer, Professor Simon Newcomb declared this phenomenal exhibition of 'falling stars' to have been "the most remarkable one ever observed." Simon Newcomb, *Astronomy for Everybody*, p. 280

"The stars fell 'even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.' Here is the exactness of the prophet. The falling stars did not come as if from several trees shaken, but from one. Those which appeared in the east fell toward the east; those which appeared in the north fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west fell toward the west; and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park) fell toward the south; and they fell not as ripe fruit falls; far from it; but they flew, they were cast, like the unripe fig, which at first refuses to leave the branch, and when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force, but each one falls on its own side of the tree. Such was the appearance of the above phenomenon to the inmates of my house. I walked to the park with two gentlemen of Pearl Street, feeling and confessing that this scene had never been figured to our minds by any book or mortal, save only by the prophet. Henry Dana Ward, correspondent for the *New York Journal of Commerce*, November 14, 1833, volume 8, No. 534, p. 2

Ellen White on the Falling of the Stars

"In 1833, two years after Miller began to present in public the evidences of Christ's soon coming, the last of the signs appeared which were promised by the Savior as tokens of His second advent. Said Jesus: "The stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24:29. And John in the Revelation declared, as he beheld in vision the scenes that should herald the day of God: "The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Revelation 6:13. This prophecy received a **striking and impressive fulfillment** in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars which has ever been recorded; "the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion! No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with so much dread and alarm by another." "Its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds. . . . Never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth; east, west, north, and south, it was the same. In a word, the whole heavens seemed in motion. . . . The display, as described in Professor Silliman's Journal, was seen all over North America. . . . From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly serene and cloudless, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole heavens." R. M. Devens, *American Progress; or, The Great Events of the Greatest Century*, ch. 28, pars. 1-5

"No language, indeed, can come up to the splendor of that magnificent display; . . . no one who did not witness it can form an adequate conception of its glory. It seemed as if the whole starry heavens had congregated at one point near the zenith, and were simultaneously shooting forth, with the velocity of lightning, to every part of the horizon; and yet they were not exhausted--thousands swiftly followed in the tracks of thousands, as if created for the occasion."--F. Reed, in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Dec. 13, 1833. "A more correct picture of a fig tree casting its figs when blown by a mighty wind, it was not possible to behold."--"The Old Countryman," in *Portland Evening Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1833.

In the *New York Journal of Commerce* of November 14, 1833, appeared a long article regarding this wonderful phenomenon, containing this statement: "No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, I suppose, like that of yesterday morning. A prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly, if we will be at the trouble of understanding stars falling to mean falling stars. . . in the only sense in which it is possible to be literally true." Thus was displayed the last of those signs of His coming, concerning which Jesus bade His disciples: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33. **After these signs**, John beheld, as the **great event next impending**, the heavens departing as a scroll, while the earth quaked, mountains and islands removed out of their places, and the wicked in terror sought to flee from the presence of the Son of man. Revelation 6:12-17.

Many, who witnessed the falling of the stars, looked upon it as a herald of the coming judgment, "an awful type, a sure forerunner, a merciful sign, of that great and dreadful day." --"The Old Countryman," in *Portland Evening Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1833. Thus the attention

of the people was directed to the fulfillment of prophecy, and many were led to give heed to the warning of the second advent." The Great Controversy, pp. 333, 334

The Second Stage of the Sixth Seal

It will be remembered that the question of the martyrs in the fifth seal has to do with two things: "judging and avenging". The first part of the sixth seal answers the first part of this plea in heaven by the judgment. That is to say, the little horn would be judged after it trampled on the saints for three and a half times. Part one of the sixth seal (6:12, 13) deals with the "judge" aspect. This part was announced by the great earthquake and the signs in the heavens (6:12, 13).

The second part of the sixth seal (6:14-17) deals with the second part of the martyrs' plea, that is, the "avenge" aspect. This is discerned clearly in Revelation 6:17. The wrath of the Lamb will be poured out upon those who oppressed His people during the second stage of persecution.

In between these two stages of the sixth seal we have the judgment. First, we have the vindication of the martyrs who were slain and then at the very end we have the sealing of the 144,000 living saints. For the living saints the sealing of the 144,000 is the judging phase (Revelation 7:1-8) and the reward given to the great multitude is the avenging stage (Revelation 7:9-17)

The second part of the sixth seal (the "avenging" part) is picked up in The Great Controversy, pp. 641, 642. On these pages Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:14-17. (See also Hebrews 12:25-27; Joel 3:16; Jeremiah 25:30-33; Isaiah 2:19-21; Isaiah 34:4; Psalm 2:2-4) Revelation 19:1-10 presents a great multitude standing victoriously in heaven. Revelation 19:1, 2 clearly indicates that at this point the avenging has already taken place. The harlot has been judged and God's people have been avenged. Revelation 19:18 refers to the same groups of people as in Revelation 6:15, 16. And Revelation 19:18-20 reaches the same climax again.

Notice the following quotation from the chapter *God's People Delivered* in the book The Great Controversy:

"Before His presence "all faces are turned into paleness;" upon the rejecters of God's mercy falls the terror of eternal despair. "The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and the faces of them all gather blackness." Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum 2:10. The righteous cry with trembling: "Who shall be able to stand?" The angels' song is hushed, and there is a period of awful silence [this would be the half hour of silence of the seventh seal]. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying: "My grace is sufficient for you." The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher and sing again as they draw still nearer to the earth.

*The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and **every mountain and island is moved out of its place** [the second part of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:14]. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people." Psalm 50:3, 4.*

*"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" **Revelation 6:15-17** [the second part of the sixth seal].*

*The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood" (Isaiah 9:5), is stilled. Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing: "**The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?**" [The last words of the sixth seal] The wicked pray to be **buried beneath the rocks of the mountains** [language of the sixth seal] rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected." The Great Controversy, pp. 641, 642*

(See also Nahum 1:6, 7; Psalm 15; Joel 2:11; Rev. 6:17; Malachi 3:1 where the same question as in Revelation 6:17 is asked. Isaiah 54:10 and Psalm 46 contain beautiful promises for God's people during this period when the islands and mountains are being moved out of their places).

Comments on Revelation 6:17

We usually think of a lamb as a tame and harmless creature. We think of the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God as an act of salvation. How then are we to understand the wrath of the Lamb? Actually in the introductory vision to the seals Jesus was presented first of all as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) and then as the Lamb as though He had been slain (Revelation 5:6). How are we to understand this paradoxical description of Jesus as the Lamb and the Lion?

Notice the following statement from Ellen G. White:

"The Lion of Judah, so terrible to the rejectors of His grace, will be the Lamb of God to the obedient and faithful. The pillar of fire that speaks terror and wrath to the transgressor of God's Law, is a token of light and mercy and deliverance to those who have kept His commandments. The arm strong to smite the rebellious will be strong to deliver the loyal." Sons and Daughters of God, p. 358

In another place Ellen White explains that the death of Christ brings salvation and judgment:

"The death of Christ brings to the rejecter of His mercy the wrath and judgments of God unmixed with mercy. This is the wrath of the Lamb." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 5, p. 1107

In the Garden and on the Cross Jesus drank the cup of the wrath of God without mixture (Matthew 26:39-42; John 18:11) for every human being who has ever drawn breath. Those who accept Jesus as personal Savior will not have to drink the cup because He drank it for them. However, those who reject the Cross of Jesus will have to drink their own cup of wrath without mixture of mercy (Revelation 14:10; 16:19)

Now, if Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12, 13 in GC 304, 333 and then quotes Revelation 6:14-17 in GC 641, 642, then the sealing (judgment) must take place in between and this is exactly the case. It is interesting to study the sequence of chapters between page 304 and 641 of The Great Controversy. In GC 304 to 634 Ellen White portrays William Miller, the three angels' messages, Jesus' work in the most holy place, the sealing, the close of probation and the time of trouble. Then she expounds upon the last part of the sixth seal in GC 641, 642.

Thus the fifth and sixth seals are to be understood together. The sixth seal answers the two pleas of the martyrs in the fifth. From 538-1798 God's martyrs are crying out for justice. They are given white robes and told to rest a while until the rest of the martyrs are slain in the future. In 1844, the process of judging the little horn is begins and the process of reversing the verdicts of human courts begins. The dead (including the martyrs) are judged first and vindicated. Then, at the very end of the judgment, the living are judged. After the court sits, then the little horn will be destroyed at the second coming. In this way the little horn will have been judged and God's people avenged!

Joining Jesus at His Throne

Revelation 7:9-17 and 14:1-5 are quoted in GC 648, 649, 665. On page 646 those who overcame receive from Jesus the crown, the name and the harp. At this point God's people have joined Him on the throne as was promised in Revelation 3:21. They are now on the sea of glass mentioned in Revelation 4:6 (cf. Revelation 15:2-4). At this point God's people have been avenged because they are judging their oppressors in Revelation 20:4.

Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven

The seventh seal mentions a period of **silence** in Heaven for about **half an hour**. A half hour in prophetic time would be seven and a half days so about a half hour would be **seven days**. This silence will mark an event that takes place as Jesus comes on the clouds to avenge the blood of His people.

Ellen White assures us that the second coming will take **several days**:

*"And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood. Then Jesus . . . took His place on the cloud which carried Him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth--a small black cloud which was the sign of the Son of man. While the cloud was passing from the **Holiest to the East**, which took **a number of days**, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint's feet." Maranatha, p. 287*

The **seventh seal** involves a question that is asked as Jesus begins His second coming to the earth, an event that will take several days: (see Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13)

*"Before His presence "all faces are turned into paleness;" upon the rejecters of God's mercy falls the terror of eternal despair." The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and the faces of them all gather blackness." Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum 2:10. The righteous cry with trembling: "**Who shall be able to stand?**" **The angels' song is hushed, and there is a period of awful silence** [this would be the half hour of silence of the seventh seal]. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying: "My grace is sufficient for you." The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher and sing again as they draw still nearer to the earth." The Great Controversy, p. 641*

Notice that the question, "who shall be able to stand?" is followed immediately by silence in heaven just like Revelation 6:17 asks the question and then the seventh seal is a period of silence. We must include here Psalm 15 where the question is asked in verse 1, then the answer is given and then at the end we are told that those who do these things shall never be moved. This is identical to Revelation 6. We also must include Joel 2:11 where the question is asked and then the preparation in the succeeding verses.

The Unfurling of the Scroll

The **unfurling of the scroll** has to do with post-millennial events. At this stage the scroll will be opened to reveal the doom of the wicked:

The Great Controversy, pp. 666ff describes the white throne judgment. As all nations are before the judgment bar of God, the scroll is finally opened before the whole universe and every tongue will confess and every knee will bow to the supremacy of Jesus (GC 668, 669; see Philippians 2:5-11 and the relationship to the great panorama. Isaiah 45:23 from where Philippians 2:9-11 comes underlines a context of the judgment, a contrast between the one true God and the pretenders

In GC, p. 671 Revelation 5:12 is sung by the white robed throng before the throne. In GC, p. 678 the final song of the whole created universe is sung giving honor and glory to the lamb (Revelation 5:13). This is the moment toward which Revelation 5:12, 13 pointed. Here I Corinthians 15:24-28 will finally be consummated.

While the book is sealed, it cannot be opened and read. An analogous case is the sealed book of Daniel 12:4. The little book is sealed until the time of the end. In other words, its contents cannot be understood until the book is unsealed.

Must take a look at Jeremiah where you have a title deed. Adam lost the title deed to the world, Satan claimed it and only the Redeemer (go'el) can redeem it (buy it back). The scroll contains the story of salvation. When the book is opened, the universe will see that only Jesus and His followers have a right to the lost possession.

"In order to protect the contents of legal documents (such as deeds of sale, contracts, wills, and letters), a seal impression was normally made with a signet or ring at the end of the written document. The sealing thus functioned in place of a signature, indicating authenticity, validity, authority, ratification, or protection of the document. In order to protect the contents against an inappropriate disclosure, the document would be tied with threads, and then the seal was impressed at the knots on bullae (a blob of clay, wax, or some other soft material) which kept the papyrus scroll folded (Job 38:14). An unbroken impression would indicate that the sealed document had not been opened. Only the owner could break the seals and disclose the contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197

"Archeologists have brought to light many documents sealed with two to seven or more seals. For instance, Roman law dictated that a will or testament had to be sealed with a minimum of seven seals of witnesses in order to render its contents valid, although some evidence shows that more than seven seals were used on occasion. . . Like any sealed scroll of the time, the scroll of Revelation 5 appears rolled up, tied with a cord, and sealed along the outside edge with seals of wax affixed at the knots. As such, it could not be opened and its contents disclosed until all of the seven seals were broken. The breaking of all seven seals is preliminary and preparatory to the actual opening of the scroll and the disclosure of its contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197, 198

"A will, according to the Praetorian Testament, in Roman Law bore the seven seals of the seven witnesses on the threads that secured the tablets or parchment (see Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, p. 1117). Such a Testament could not be carried into execution till all the seven seals were loosed." R. H. Charles, International Critical Commentary, volume 1, p. 137

"The central item, the seven-sealed scroll, portrays a will or testament, for that is precisely what such a seven-sealed document was in Roman law in John's day. We find, then, that the picture we have in the subdivision of Revelation from 4:1 to 8:1 is a court scene in which a will or testament is to be opened. In the context of Revelation, this will or testament would be a title-deed, as it were, to man's lost inheritance—an inheritance which has been repurchased by Christ, the Lamb. Thus the scroll is a book of destiny. The opening of it means inheritance in God's kingdom; its remaining closed means forfeiture. No wonder John wept when he thought no one could open the scroll." Kenneth Strand, Interpreting the Book of Revelation, p. 55

Ellen White concurs with these scholars but she adds some very telling information:

"There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God's providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth's history to its close." Manuscript Releases, volume 9, p. 7

"Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah." Christ's Object Lessons, p. 294

Several things emerge from this last statement: Ellen White is writing this around the year 1900. It is very clear that the scroll had not yet been opened at that time. Furthermore, in order for those who cried out: "release unto us Barabbas" to see the consequences of the decision they made in the past, they must resurrect. This means that the scroll will not be opened before them until they resurrect in the second resurrection after the millennium.

On the opening of the scroll after the millennium, Ellen White gives this vivid description:

"Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a panoramic view [in high definition] appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the successive steps in the great plan of redemption. The Savior's lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plottings of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror--the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before Annas, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of Pilate, before the cowardly and cruel Herod, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die--all are vividly portrayed.

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes--the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life.

The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. Each actor recalls the part which he

performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**; the **priests and rulers** and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming: "He died for me!"

Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their truehearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while outside the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is **Nero**, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremest anguish he found satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.

There are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers** of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them." GC 666-669

The Sequence of Events in Revelation 4:1-8:1

Revelation 4: The father is alone on the throne as heaven prepares to receive Jesus who is returning victoriously from earth at His ascension (Acts 1:9-11).

Revelation 5: Jesus, who has overcome the devil, the flesh and the world joins His Father on His throne (3:21). Jesus now sits at the Father's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool (Psalm 110; I Corinthians 15:24-28)

Revelation 6: The saints now overcome on earth even as Jesus overcame on earth. The events of the seven seals transpire between the time when Jesus sat on His Father's throne and the time when the saints will join Him on His own throne.

Revelation 7:9-17; 19:1-8: The saints were delivered from death in the final tribulation and they now ascend to heaven and join Jesus on His throne

Another way of looking at it:

Revelation 4, 5: The Christian Era begins
Revelation 7, 19: The Christian Era ends

Revelation 4, 5: Jesus has overcome and sat on the throne
Revelation 7, 19: Saints overcome and sit on the throne

Revelation 4, 5: Praise to the Father and to the Lamb because of creation and redemption

Revelation 7, 19: Praise to God for delivering His people from the wrath of the end time harlot and her daughters

Revelation 19 and the Seven Seals

- **White Horse:** Jesus rides a white horse "conquering and to conquer" (Revelation 19:11) In The Great Controversy, p. 641: Jesus rides as a mighty conqueror, victor. He has subdued His enemies: "Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a "Man of Sorrows," to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead." Notice the crown on his head: "No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow." The *stephanos* of Revelation 6:2 has become the *diademata*.
- **Red Horse:** Next we see a **sword** which comes out of Jesus' mouth. The sword takes away peace from the earth and as a result there is war and bloodshed: "The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed." (GC 655; 19:11, 15, 21)
- **Black Horse:** You have a **supernatural darkness** (16:10). Ellen White calls describes this darkness as a "dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night" (GC 636).
- **Yellow Horse:** The Word of God now slays the oppressors of His people (19:13-15). God's people died for the written Word of God and now the Word of God in person slays their oppressors (20:4-6)
- **Fifth Seal:** The number of the **martyrs is now complete**. They have been accounted worthy of life in the judgment. The harlot has been **judged** and now they are **avenged** and resurrected (Revelation 19:1, 2) and they now become the judges of their oppressors (Revelation 20:4-6). The martyrs come forth from their graves. Their cries have finally been vindicated by the justice of God. Until this point they were resting from their labors until the number of all the martyrs was complete (Revelation 14:13)
- **Sixth Seal:** Next we have the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars (Joel 2:10; Isaiah 13:9, 10; Matthew 24:29, 30; GC 637, 641-642; EW 41). An earthquake also

takes place at this time (GC 636, 637; Rev. 6:17). All of these signs were seen in the sixth seal. The results of the judgment are now seen and shown. The righteous are saved and the wicked are condemned. God has judged and avenged. Revelation 19:11 explains that Jesus comes to judge and avenge. Jesus comes executes judgment against the wicked for what they have done to His people. The tables are now turned on the wicked. History is reversed. The lamb now becomes a lion. When John saw him in Revelation 5 he saw a lamb but when he takes over the kingdom, John sees a lion. So Revelation 6 is the period between the lamb and the lion. Revelation 6:16, 17 portrays this moment when the lamb roars like a lion. Have you ever seen a roaring lamb like in this verse? This is amplified in Jeremiah 25:30-38 (especially verse 38 where the Lord roars).

- **Seventh Seal:** The half hour of silence in heaven: (Habakkuk 2:20—in context immediately before chapter 3 where Jesus comes from heaven at His second coming.
- Jesus now takes His people to heaven (GC 645-657) and gives them the insignia of their royal state (the crown of glory, the victors, crown and the shining harp (GC 646; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; Revelation 14:2; 15:2; GC 648, 649)

Notice the following passage from Ellen White where the various elements above come together:

"By this time the 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus' new name. [REV. 3:12.] At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet. [REV. 3:9.] Soon our eyes were drawn to the East, for a small black cloud had appeared about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the Sign of the Son of Man. [MAT. 24:30.] We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, lighter, and brighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. [REV. 14:14.] The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over it, around the cloud were ten thousand angels singing a most lovely song. And on it sat the Son of Man, [LUKE 21:27.] on his head were crowns, [REV. 19:12.] his hair was white and curly and lay on his shoulders. [REV. 1:14.] His feet had the appearance of fire, [REV. 1:15.] in his right hand was a sharp sickle, [REV. 14:14.] in his left a silver trumpet. [THESS. 4:16.] His eyes were as a flame of fire, [REV. 1:14.] which searched his children through and through. Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless? Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, [REV. 8:1.] when Jesus spoke. Those who have clean hands and a pure heart shall be able to stand, my grace is sufficient for you. At this, our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sung again while the cloud drew still nearer the earth. Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as he descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire [2 THESS.

1:7,8] He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised his eyes and hands to heaven and cried out, [JOHN 5:25.] Awake! Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise. Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, Hallelujah! as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. [THESS. 4:17.] We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads. [2 ESDRAS 2:43.] He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. [REV. 15:2. REV. 7:9.]” *A Word to the Little Flock* pp. 14, 15; also contained in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, pp. 59-61

Synopsis and Overview of the Seven Seals

The seals are a portrayal of sacred history, not secular history. They describe a succession of historical events between the inauguration of Christ as priest/king in heaven and His final coming to take over the absolute kingship of the world. The seals have a certain “flow”. That is to say, they are not a description of individual, isolated and disconnected events of church history but rather a sequential and interconnected description of Satan’s battle strategy as he attempts to take over complete dominion of the world. On the other hand, the true church filled with the Holy Spirit is Christ’s chosen method to gain the victory in the struggle for world dominion. This battle is exemplified in the imagery of the building of God’s spiritual temple in *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 596-602.

Under the first seal the Apostolic Church goes out conquering and to conquer. These conquests of the enemy’s territory infuriate the hosts of wickedness who bring about persecution under the Roman emperors (red horse), doctrines of darkness under Constantine (black horse) and death during the middle Ages (yellow horse).

The fifth seal opens to view the fact that the battle is far from over when the persecutions of the middle Ages come to an end. There will be a final struggle, no holds barred, for world dominion. An even greater number of martyrs will lose their lives in this battle for the word of God and the testimony which they held. This battle is described in Revelation 12, 13; 14:18-20; 16:4-7; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2. The fifth seal shows that the battle for world dominion will have a great final struggle.

The two stages of martyrs of the fifth seal must be understood in the context of the two periods of dominion of the Roman Catholic papacy. In between the two periods of persecution is the deadly wound (Revelation 13:3). This perspective is also found in Daniel 11 where the scenes of verses 30-39 will be repeated in verses 40-45. The fifth seal itself indicates that the historical events of the first four seals will transpire once more but on an accentuated and global scale. It is not that the first four seals will be fulfilled again but rather that the historical events which fulfilled them will occur once more in **similar fashion**. If the injustices of the first four seals in church history led the martyrs to cry out in the fifth seal, then we would expect the cry in the future to come as a result of injustices similar to those in

the first four seals in the future. As the little horn thought it could change the Sabbath during the 1260 years, so the beast will impose Sunday observance on pain of death in the future

The future will look something like this: As at Pentecost, God's people will receive the power of the latter rain as the disciples received the power of the early rain. The church will go out with power to preach the light and truth of God's word—conquering and to conquer (PK 725: **White horse**). This will awaken persecution (**red horse**) as the doctrines of darkness and superstition (**black horse**) overwhelm the world (Revelation 18:2, 3). Eventually God's people will be condemned to death (**pale horse**). These will be the second group of martyrs that are mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11. When the martyrs were slain it looked like the enemies of Christ had triumphed (AA 581). At the end of human history once again the martyrs will cry out (**fifth seal**). Again it will appear that Satan's kingdom is about to take over the whole world and that the lone dissenting voices will be forever silenced. If Satan could blot the remnant from the earth, his triumph would be complete (GC 618). The battle will rage between the remnant of God and the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The martyrs will cry out to God for justice from their graves (Ellen White makes this clear in her quotations about the martyrs in the fifth seal). Finally Jesus will take the battlefield and finish the work and take over kingship of the world. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Signs in the sun, the moon and the stars (**sixth seal**) announce the coming of the victorious king. He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords and as the lion of the tribe of Judah.

Thus the final scenes will repeat the general principles of the seven seals. At the end the church will once again be pure and will go out **conquering and to conquer**. As a result **persecution** will come. **Darkness** will come into the church because Babylon will be full of demons. As a result **death** will be decreed upon God's people and the martyrs will cry out for justice. Then the category of the **martyrs will be complete**

Many internet sites are critical of what they **perceive** to be Ellen White's view of the sixth seal. Unfortunately they have not studied carefully what Ellen White has said about this seal. They have read her comments superficially. They have not taken into account the order of the signs or the historical context in which they took place.

Here is an example of an internet site and the "unanswered" questions it brings up (but as we have seen, each one of these questions has been answered in the material above:

Unanswered Questions

If the events of 1755, 1780, and 1833 were indeed fulfillments of prophecy, several questions are raised:

1. Why didn't the signs produce the effect described in the Bible?

Revelation 6:15-16 describes the people who witness the signs as being panic-stricken. These people, including kings and leaders of nations, are described as running to the mountains,

hiding in dens, and asking for the mountains to fall on them. There is no evidence that the signs of 1755, 1780, and 1833 produced this effect.

2. Why were the signs localized when the Bible seems to indicate a global scale?

While the signs described in the Bible appear to be global events, the three signs pointed out by Ellen White were on a seemingly smaller, localized scale. The Lisbon earthquake was limited to the Iberian peninsula and Northern Africa. The dark day was seen primarily in the north-eastern United States. The Leonid meteor shower was perhaps the most widespread event, yet even it was seen only in the Western Hemisphere.

3. Why didn't those who witnessed the signs see the return of Christ?

Mark 13:24-26 seems to indicate that those who see the signs of Christ's return will also witness His return:

Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.
Mark. 13:26

None of those who witnessed any of the signs mentioned by Ellen White are alive today. The 1755 earthquake occurred over 250 years ago. How could it be a sign of Christ's *imminent* return? Furthermore, Revelation 6:12-14 seems to indicate the signs will follow each other in fairly rapid succession. It appears that the same people who witness the earthquake, also witness the darkness and the stars falling. Given the life expectancies of the era, it is unlikely that anyone old enough to have witnessed and remembered the Lisbon earthquake in Portugal in 1755 was still alive 78 years later in 1833 to witness the Leonid meteor shower in North America. Furthermore, everyone who witnessed these "signs" died long ago. What good are "signs of the end" if those signs are not witnessed by the people living in the last generation?

These unanswered questions lead to the conclusion that the events of 1755, 1780, and 1833 could not possibly be the signs of the end described in Revelation 6:12-14.